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A STUDY IN THE PERSONAL USAGE OF UNIVERSAL  
SYMBOLS TOWARDS A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN  
ART AND LIFE

by

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## 1. PREFACE

At the time of the original proposal of this thesis title, the author was of the opinion that a schism between art and societal life had occurred, due mainly to the artist playing an increasingly smaller role in society as a whole. In the course of subsequent research, it appeared that the schism had hypothetically taken place on two levels or planes; and that where reconciliation could conceivably take place on the one level, it was not axiomatic that it could or even should on the second level.

The theoretical research following the practical work gave rise to the writer's examination of these two proposed aspects of the schism, which may be summarised as follows:

1. The schism on the first level may be contextualized on the "Horizontal" plane of the Physical, and in general terms, of the Social, where the determining circumstantial factors of the Social, Economic, Political, Educational, Geographical and Cultural have a direct influence on the relation of Art to Society (Art to Life).

The artist's relevance, to the extent that he is integrated with or extraneous to his society, is partially determined by the above factors, in that the role apportioned to him is directed by the prevailing ideologies held by those who offer him Sponsorship or Patronage.

On this level, the artist and his work are determined "Homocratically", i.e. essentially ruled or governed by the actions of Man; in which case the State is separated from the Church, and where, for the most part, the individual is separated from the Sacred.

2. In contra-distinction to the above, we have the alternate situation, namely that of a "Theocracy" where "all political laws come under what is held to be Divine Will. Church and State become one"<sup>(1)</sup>, and where the individual identifies with the Sacred.

This is proposed as the Vertical Plane where the former circumstantial factors mentioned come under the influence and are directed by the ordinances of Religion. The writer does not imply here that the Church exercises decisive influence over Politics or the State, as in Mediaeval times, but rather that each individual's participation in Life, whatever it may be, is guided by 'right' actions directed by his reconnection with the Sacred and the Spiritual worlds.

In a 'Sanctified world' where the Horizontal plane is subordinate to and is automatically absorbed into the Vertical plane, the art-life schism disappears.

Because of the Noumenal nature of the Spiritual, it will of necessity, have to be symbolized in a form which is,

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(1) "Dictionary of Philosophy" - Dagobert Runes.

in itself, at once comprehensible and constitutes 'meaning'.\* Man has evolved the need for the variety of Rituals and Symbols encountered in and embodied within all religions, and within art itself.

It therefore appears that, while there is a definite need for the art-life reconciliation on the exclusively Horizontal or Social plane, the art-life schism or barrier is in fact no barrier at all when rather seen in terms of the Vertical plane. John Cage remarks:

"I wouldn't say that we are interested in destroying the barrier between Art and Life, or even blurring it. I would say that we are interested in observing that there is no barrier between the two." (2)

This statement by Cage is, quite possibly, referring to the situation as found in the Vertical plane where the use of the 'SYMBOL' in religious and art activity is not a barrier or a schism at all but a means of manifesting the spiritual within the Material world. In this sense it is not a barrier, but a mode. It is the means for the transference of Spirit into Matter.

The writer is clearly aware of the prevailing complex contemporary ideological and indeed plural 'schisms' on

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\* 'meaning' - 'Meaning' here is used to refer to the content that any Universal symbol embodies with its resultant effect.

(2) Harold Rosenberg - "Art on the Edge", p.248.

the Horizontal or Social plane (in the broader sense). While it may appear to be of supreme importance for the reconciliation of the many contradictory and opposing ideologies that prevail at present to take place, the writer is of the opinion that this reconciliation, however it may eventually occur, would deal with Life on only one dimension, that of the Horizontal plane.

From the outset it has been the writer's intention to 'remind' and hopefully to contribute to the premise of connecting these two planes, through the use of Symbolism in the practical work. It is through this re-connection with and to the Vertical plane that the natural reconciliation may take place, that is, between art and life in the 'Social' context.

It would appear that if this 're-connection' with God and the cosmos were to take place, 'art' would still continue to function in some form, and that the artist would continue to contribute to the manifestation and re-definition of the spiritual.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

In much contemporary art theory published during the past decade, a great deal of speculation has taken place concerning the hypothesis that art and life have become separated.

The plastic arts have become increasingly 'complex' and, at least for the general audience or spectator, have become more difficult to comprehend and to identify with. This has lead to a relative breakdown in communication between the artist and his public, and the artist has, in so many words, 'alienated' his public on which he relies for his material, emotional, intellectual and spiritual support.

Artists and the art establishment have come to rely upon mutual support for their continued raison d'etre. Quite naturally a sense of anxiety and malaise must take root in such a closed situation.

In the 1960's the economic climate of the USA and the West as a whole, was probably more buoyant than at any prior stage of history, and the excess capital of large business concerns and individual patrons was ploughed back into the arts. This unprecedented prosperity stimulated and found a ready art market, resulting in the creation of an exhuberant art climate in which art and artists flourished in their new-found state; that of

being 'wanted' by great numbers of people.

Harold Rosenberg writes:

"For the first time, the art called vanguard has been accepted en masse and its ideals of innovation, experiment, dissent have been institutionalized and made official. He (the artist) may now look forward to a career in which possibilities are eliminated. In short, painting is no longer a haven for self-defeating contemplatives but a glamorous arena in which performers of talent may rival the celebrity of senators or T.V. stars." (1)

Whereas in the 1960's the 'art scene' was thriving and the artist's public 'large', quite the opposite is the case in the 1970's where Rosenberg's statement appears utterly nonsensical in that the present socio-economic climate offers the artist relatively little support, especially in the light of his "en masse".

It is a fact that the healthiness of the state of art during the past 500 years has been directly associated with sponsorship of some kind and that this sponsorship is largely dependent upon the political ideology and climate and the directly related economic prosperity of the society at the time. Given the fact that the

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(1) Harold Rosenberg - "The Anxious Object", 1964, p.13.

1960's witnessed a period of enormous economic prosperity, the first world countries, at least, were in a position to indulge in luxuries and excesses, the acquisition of art being one of them.

Support for the artist came from all sides. Governments built large new public galleries and cultural centres, subsidized large exhibitions, supplied grants and scholarships to artists, new commercial galleries sprung up overnight, art magazines and art books of all kinds proliferated the art scene. The artist shared in this new-found prosperity, and if he had talent might "rival the celebrity of Senators or T.V. stars"<sup>(2)</sup>.

This unparalleled phenomenon in contemporary art history created an exuberantly buoyant and supportive atmosphere and encouraged the artist to further innovative grounds, forcing the parameters of art concerns and expression, and striving for 'originality', and hence recognition. Art movement after art movement was born and given centre stage with its artists. After a short period of a few years, (in some cases even months), these movements died, giving place to incoming trends.

By the late 1960's the traditions of painting and sculpture were all but exhausted due to the artists' incessant search for the 'new' and the fact that art had

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(2) Ibid.

thoroughly entered the area of 'big business'. A temporary stage of impasse had been reached. The artist of the then so-called Avant Garde searched wider afield, looking to the new media (technology) and new modes of expression to satisfy the almost gluttonous art public who were satisfied in devouring trend upon trend, 'movement' upon 'movement' for such short periods of time.

From this unprecedented acceleration and innovation of the Avant-Garde art, came the consequent flood of fragmentation of art itself into smaller and yet smaller parts, and the reductive process had become well established. The scope and means of expression was extended, resulting in further trivialization. Ultimately, an empty canvas and an empty gallery space became the subject matter itself. The artist himself, albeit unawares, contributed to the demise of art and his own alienation in his desire for 'Modernism'. Art critics of international repute justified these empty sheets of paper, canvass and galleries, and convinced both the art cogniscenti and even the artists themselves that the 'work' was both valid and meaningful.

Now in the 1970's the majority of the 1960's art public has turned away in disbelief and non-comprehension and has largely not bothered to return to the galleries. Their interest and support is rather exclusively given to the worlds of TV, Film and Sport with their "stars and heroes".



By the late 1960's - early 1970's the art public had become exhausted in the attempt to unravel the most recent works of the Avant-Garde. Without the commercial gallery system to promote and support it, and due to the concurrent economic decline and relative recession in the First and Second World sponsorship by large cultural organizations, National and Municipal galleries, Educational Institutions, etc., art has at present been left to its own devices.

Now left without the previous support the artist is more or less left on his own to create and exhibit as best he can. For the most part the artist has not the where-withal, whatever it may be (Financially, Emotionally, Psychologically) to exhibit the work he has produced. A natural disillusionment must follow and a large majority of artists, with the exception of those well-established in the 1960's and before, are forced to turn to other work and to develop skills to financially survive. For the most part, the reward for the tenacity of those artists who still manage to retain the obsessive and driving desire to create and exhibit, is a public reaction of a stony silence, vehement aggression or still worse, total apathy.

Although occasional highlights of Contemporary art still occur, (most retrospective exhibitions of works of artists or movements from 1900 onwards), the rejection of the contemporary artist by the public at large is all but

complete. The art and life (art and society) relationship has thus diminished to the point where the anxiety of the artist has demanded that he rediscover his *raison d'etre* within his society.

"The anxiety of art is a peculiar kind of insight. It arises, not as a reflex to the condition of artists, but from their reflection upon the role of art among other human activities." (3)

"The anxiety of art is a philosophical quality perceived by artists to be inherent in acts of creation in our time. It manifests itself, first of all, in the questioning of art itself. Anxiety is thus the form in which modern art raises itself to the level of human history. It is an objective reflection of the indefiniteness of the function of art in present day society and the possibility of the displacement of art by newer forms of expression, emotional stimulation and communication ... the art object persists without a secure identity." (4)

The contemporary artist, then, can be seen to have an even smaller audience than in the era prior to the 1960's

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(3) Harold Rosenberg - "The Anxious Object", p.16.

(4) Ibid., p.17.

exploration of art and its consequent following. The present condition of art is certainly a very different one compared to those conditions of the past, when the artist and his society understood the role they both played in the social structure as a whole.

Up to the time of the Renaissance this clearly defined role was known and the artist was accorded his parameters and function in terms of supplying on the one hand and reinforcing on the other, the social-political-economic structure of the society in which, and for which, he was working. He supplied the Societal and Cultural "glue" in that he sustained, artistically and thus metaphoric-ally, the essential paradigms through which his society operated and sustained itself Materially and Spiritually.

"The most important shift in paradigms in the past several centuries, the shift which created what now we refer to as modernism, occurred in the second half of the 18th Century and the first part of the 19th Century when the Industrial Revolution combined with the political revolutions both in this country and on the continent to destroy the validity of those dominant paradigms that had governed Western art and thought since the middle ages, if not from the times of classical Greece. Today we can look back and see that this process

had actually been going on at a gradual rate since the 15th Century. But by the 19th Century our world was committed to the compelling vision of a democratic egalitarianism and we could no longer accept - at least in principle - a paradigm of social order based on a hierarchy of rank or class. Similarly, the industrial revolution had created the possibility of an economy of sufficiency which made it impossible for a paradigm based on an economy of scarcity to be maintained. This condition led to the emergence of new paradigms, the most important of those being the idea of economic growth through some form of industrial capitalism and the idea of progress as an alternative to judgment day. In the arts these major changes are reflected in the emergence of a marked pluralism of styles, a tendency to subordinate aesthetic style to more significant ethical and social concerns, the disappearance of genres, and the eventual devaluation of the art object."<sup>(5)</sup>

The artist would at present appear to be socially irrelevant (in the broader sense of the word), except for supplying peripheral and non-essential needs as those required by the entertainment, decorating and design

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(5) Robert W. Corrigan - "The Transformation of the Avant-Garde".

industries.

One may argue here that the contemporary artist since the turn of the century has had a role whereby he has been the means to create and validate social stratification through the art object being used as a 'status symbol', i.e. separating society into a hierarchy of economic sub-groupings, through the ability of the individual (that of being adequately wealthy), to acquire the unique art object. This 'acquisition' is, then, tied to a privileged class, which means that to 'participate' in contemporary art, material wealth becomes a prerequisite, and hence the unprivileged classes (the majority of society) are automatically excluded from this type of 'participation'.

"There have been many studies of the avant-garde published in recent years, but unquestionably the most challenging and imaginative of them is the late Renato Poggioli's "The Theory of the Avant-Garde". Poggioli's major thesis is that the particular tensions of our bourgeois, capitalistic, and technological society provide the *raison d'être* for all avant-garde movements. Because in a democratic society the artist no longer has the Maecenas of an aristocratic culture to direct his work, he is forced to create not only the work but the audience for that work as well. Of necessity he

becomes as much a "producer" for a market as he is a creator, and this puts the artist in a strange and antagonistic relationship to his audience. A relationship which creates both his sense of alienation and isolation and his tendency to become self-serving, partisan, proselytizing, narcissistic and even subversive." (6)

Although this line of argument has a degree of truth in it, it is certainly only a part of a larger set of concerns and is rather an effect of the present western political-social-economic system than the cause.

We may now consider the art/life relationship to be almost completely severed, and that society has turned elsewhere in search, albeit unconsciously, for that which art had formerly supplied. Fine Art in its present state appears to play no meaningful role in the structure of society as a whole.

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(6) Robert W. Corrigan - "The Transformation of the Avant-Garde".

PART 1

AN OUTLINE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL  
CONSIDERATIONS PERTAINING TO  
THE BODY OF PRACTICAL WORK

### 3.A THE SEARCH FOR A MEANINGFUL MODEL OF REALITY

In Section 1 a brief description outlined how the contemporary Art/Life schism has manifested itself in terms of the interrelated political-social-economic aspects, and as such, refers to the problem as being in the order of the temporal and the empirical. Dissatisfied with this approach as an inadequate model, in that it only considers the particulars of the greater environment and its determining influences the writer was forced to seek a more 'Wholistic'<sup>1</sup> approach and to discover a model that would attempt to be more all-embracing and less empirically determinist. This approach led to the questioning of the very nature of art itself, and to tracing it back historically in an attempt to discover some of the underlying Universal principles that had been personally overlooked or inadequately understood in art terms.

In this research it became apparent that art, far from being only a sign system created through the necessity for communication and expression, was in some way acting as a social "glue" for particular peoples in their own time and place. It could be seen as a conjoining principle or device in that the populace had a means of relating to each other in a way that was understood by all within that society. The particular spoken

1. See J.C. Smuts - Holism and Evolution - Chapt. V. Smuts derives his term 'Holism' from Wholism and defines it as:

"The close approach to each other of the concepts of matter, life and mind, and their partial overflow of each other's domain, raises the further question whether lack of them, there is not a fundamental principle of which they are the progressive outcome." - p.85.



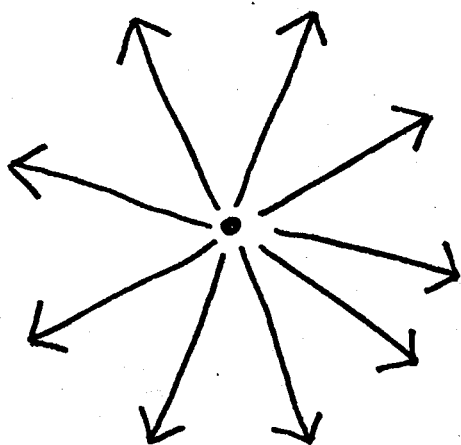
language, together with the laws and rites of that society, gave a sense of belonging to a greater whole, and as such gave rise to relatively cohesive societies.

The arts played a similar role in that besides acting as social "glue" to bond the society wholistically, they could also be seen historically as an indication of the quality of life both Materially and Spiritually. In other words, the art of each society in its particular time and place could be seen metaphorically as a "barometer of consciousness", in that, although much art-work through the ages was technically competent, art historians, critics and artists have been inclined to give greater value and importance to those artists and art movements or periods that have a 'quality' about them.

This 'quality' has often been referred to as 'Transcendent, Metaphysical, Otherness, Noumenous', amongst other terms. This particular line of exploration in terms of the all-embracing model could only, and did eventually lead to the conclusion that a multi-disciplinary model incorporating an inter-disciplinary model could be the only logical path to follow.

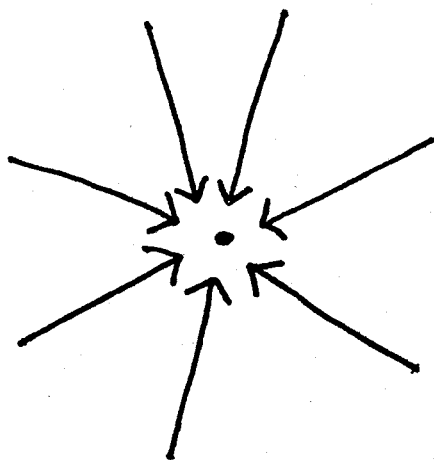
This would be a task of enormous magnitude and would quite obviously be limited in the finding of a "resolution", but would at least attempt to reinforce the already-established fact that the separateness of disciplines be re-evaluated and that larger models incorporating multi-disciplinary approaches would have to be adopted.

In Alvin Toffler's "Future Shock" he assumes a continuous explosion of new data and information in all and individual disciplines with their resultant affects upon present and future living conditions, which can be diagrammatised as:



an explosion from  
centre or centrifugal

Gordon Rattray Taylor in "Rethink" poses the opposite point of view, in that he states that contemporary researchers in most disciplines are using inter-disciplinary methodologies and are seeking new solutions through the inter-relating of parallel and relevant disciplines, and could thus be seen as moving towards centre; a re-questioning of basic premises, or the radicalising of attitudes.

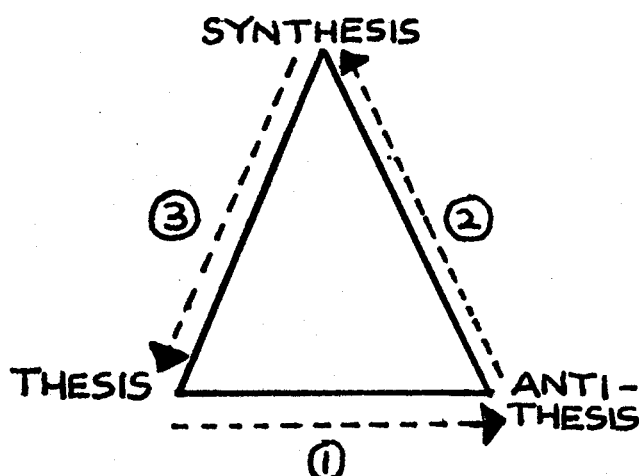


Centripetal movement  
or an implosion to-  
wards centre

It is probable that the most appropriate model lies in neither of these two seemingly exclusive approaches, but rather in the nature of a dialectic between these polar opposites.

This dialectic process is basically proposed in the Western tradition by both Plato and Hegel; and by ancient philosophers of the Eastern tradition, resulting in the Yin-Yang symbol of the Taoists.

Although it could be argued here, it does seem to be a general inclination for the Western model with its linear (cause and effectual) and empirical approach to differ from the Eastern model with its Essential and "magical" approach and non-linear/non-discursive attributes.

Western traditionDialectic ApproachEastern tradition

Symbol as a means of  
reconciling apparent  
Dualism towards Monism

It would again appear that a more all-embracing or Wholistic model lies not in these relative and exclusive attributes and tendencies, but in a combination of the two. Namely, a working relationship between the Essential and the Contextual that "Realizes" the Ideal in the Material.

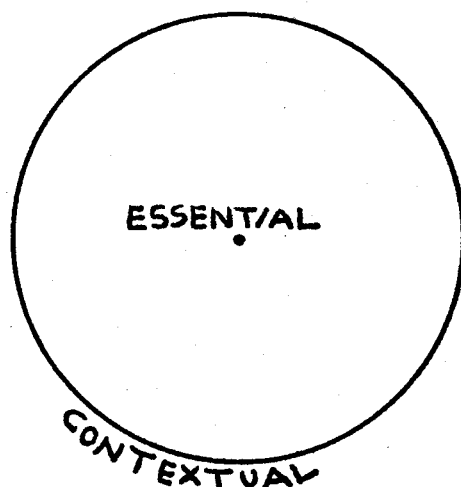
It also became apparent that the development of this Wholistic model would include relevant research in the disciplines of Theology and its comparative religious systems, Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology, History, Psychology and Esoterics. It is from these studies that a personal Wholistic model has been constructed, which is described in 3.B.

### 3.B A PERSONAL WHOLISTIC MODEL

Although art historians have written in considerable depth with vision and profundity about the role of religion in art in earlier civilizations, it seems strange that (the) contemporary art critics now no longer regard this aspect as relevant in the assessment and evaluation of contemporary art. Surely the formalist model, and the egalitarian model with its political and economic ideologies, are not the only considerations of contemporary art criticism; surely that model which includes underlying principles which give "meaning" to life should also be included?

The word 'religion' comes from the Latin 'ligare' - 'to connect'. Thus, 'religion' means to reconnect ourselves to what underlies our existence. It is here that art has played its dominant role, for it has offered a means for the re-understanding, re-identifying and re-connecting of man with the cosmos in a magical and Wholistic manner. Traditionally it is through art that man has come to understand his relevance and his relation as a part of the whole, to the whole, and not, as we encounter in the present political-economic climate, a competitive separatist and disjunctive mode.

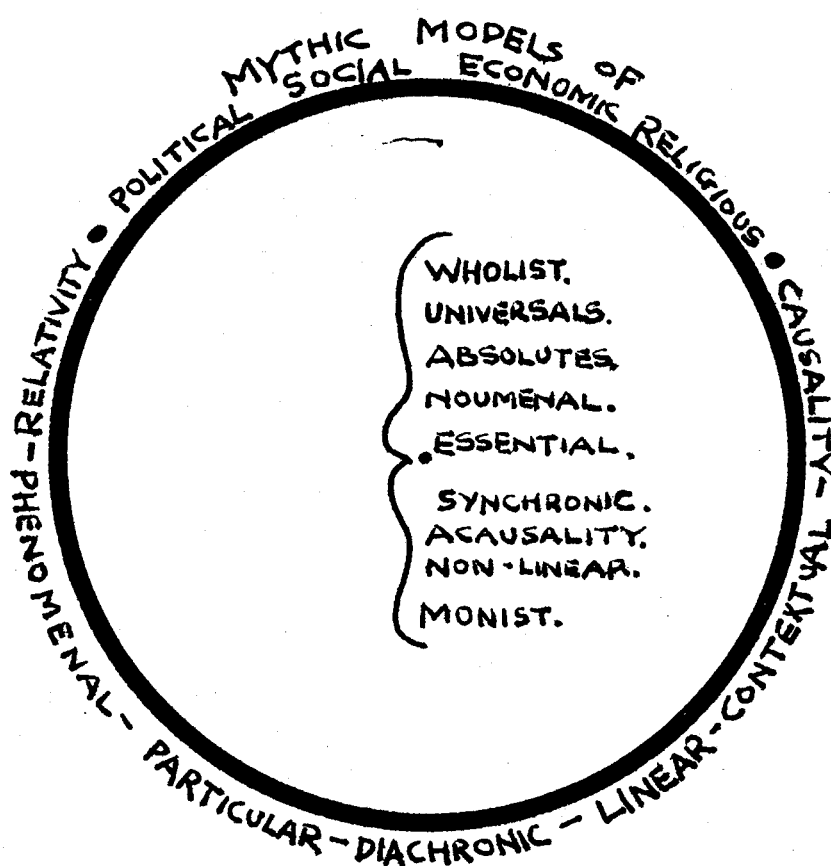
A model proposed for the analysis of the nature of creative activity by the educationalist Eliot Eisner, uses the terms "Essentialist" and "Contextualist".

Diagram No. 1

This model can be expanded by means of acceptance of the premise that a Dualist split is apparently created between these two aspects which may later be seen as parts of each other, rather than as polar opposites.

If we accept, as many structural linguists and scientists of physics and chemistry have proposed, that there appear to be sets of Universals or innate 'patterns' in both language and nature into which particulars such as the specific words of language or the elements of genetic coding systems, seem to "slot", as in the RNA and DNA molecular structure models, we are apparently confronted with the irrefutable aspect of Universality and the world of Absolutes.

Accepting this line of argument which has alternately been 'proven' or 'disproven' by innumerable philosophers, theologians, scientists and empiricists, it is proposed here that these Universals have a mutually responding dialectic operation in reality, in conjunction with the physical or phenomenal world, which can also be described in Eisner's terms as "Contextualist".

Diagram No. 2

At first glance this diagram could appear to denote a dualist/idealist or Platonic schism between the phenomenal world of appearance and the sensuous, with the Noumenal world of Reality or to quote Kant: "the object of a non-sensuous intuition".

On the contrary, the author's approach is specifically Aristotelian where matter is not separate from essence or ideal, but rather that matter is the embodiment of essence or ideal.

At the centre of the diagram are terms as used by various disciplines that are used to denote Universal and un-altering attributes, and at the circumference, is the

eternally changing phenomenal world with its myths of man and his social institutions of Religion, Politics, Culture, Education, etc. This implies that although there is an eternal change in the world of appearances - the phenomenal world, the same sets of Absolutes, Universals or Essentials still persist but in varying forms. As the world of mythic and physical forms is in constant change, it would also appear that these Universals are 'grouped' or 'nested' in various ways according to some internal necessity as required by the Phenomenal/Noumenal whole.

The latter description of the Essential/Contextual proposition serves firstly as an acceptance by the writer of the embodiment of the absolute in the temporal, and secondly as a model by which to introduce and describe the nature of the Sacred and the Profane in terms of both time and space.



### 3.C THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

Man has always needed 'meaning' in his life, so that he may live an essential, ordered and known existence, i.e. his need for meaning was, and is, manifested by the establishment of specific cosmologies. By evolving such cosmologies man could then have a point of reference, and hence priorities, from which to 'measure' all living activity, natural occurrences, and construct sets of comparisons and relationships that took place within and around his immediate and greater environments.

He 'stakes' this latter point of reference, literally and metaphorically, through ritualized action, and thereby "founds the world".

"If the world is to be lived in, it must be founded, and no world can come to birth in the chaos of the homogeneity and relativity of profane space. The discovery or projection of a fixed point - the centre - is equivalent to the creation of the world." (1)

This "founding of the world" is directly related to a basic premise which is the nature and characteristic of both sacred and profane space and time.

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(1) Mircea Eliade - The Sacred and the Profane, p.22.

Before continuing to describe these terms, i.e. the sacred and profane, I wish to connect the statement referring to the artist's alienation as proposed in the Introduction, with a quote from Eliade:

"No true orientation is now possible, for the fixed point no longer enjoys a unique ontological status; it appears and disappears in accordance with the needs of the day. Properly speaking, there is no longer any world, there are only fragments of a shattered universe, an amorphous mass consisting of an infinite number of more or less neutral places in which man moves, governed and driven by the obligations of an existence incorporated into an industrial society."<sup>(2)</sup>

#### Sacred Space and Profane Space

"The first possible definition of the Sacred is that it is the opposite of the Profane. Man becomes aware of the Sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the act of manifestation of the Sacred, the

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(2) Ibid.

term Hierophany is used, e.g. manifestation of the Sacred in some ordinary object, a stone, tree, place, mountain, etc. It is the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects or places that are an integral part of our natural, profane, world. For those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality. In other words, for those who have a 'religious experience' all nature is capable of revealing itself as 'cosmic sacrality'. The cosmos in its entirety can become a hierophany.

For religious man, space is not homogenous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others: ("Draw not nigh hither" says the Lord to Moses; "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Exodus 3,5). There is, then, a Sacred space, and hence a strong significant space; there are other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency, amorphous. Nor is this all. For religious man, this spatial non-homogeneity finds expression in the experience

of an opposition between space that is Sacred - the only real, really existing space - and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it.

It must be said at once that the religious experience of the non-homogeneity of space is a primordial experience, homologizable to a founding of the world. It is not a matter of theoretical speculation, but of a primary religious experience that precedes all reflection on the world. For it is the break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation. Where the Sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space, there is also revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the non-reality of the vast surrounding expanse. The manifestation of the Sacred ontologically founds the world. In the homogenous and infinite expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established, the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a centre.

So it is clear to what degree the discovery - that is, the revelation - of a Sacred space possesses existential value for religious man; for nothing can begin, nothing can be done, without a previous orientation - and any orientation implies acquiring a fixed point. The discovery or projection of a fixed point - the centre - is equivalent to the creation of the world.

For the profane experience, on the contrary, space is homogenous and neutral; no break qualitatively differentiates the various parts of its mass. The profane experience maintains the homogeneity and hence the relativity of space." (3)

#### Sacred Time and Profane Time

"For religious man, time too, like space, is neither homogenous nor continuous. On the one hand there are the intervals of a Sacred time, the time of festivals (by far the greater of which are periodical); on the other hand there is profane time, ordinary temporal duration, in which acts without religious meaning have their setting.

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(3) Ibid.

Between these two kinds of time there is the solution of continuity; but by means of rites, religious man can pass without danger from ordinary temporal duration to Sacred time.

One essential difference between these two qualities of time strikes us immediately; by its very nature, sacred time is reversible, in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial, mythical time made present. Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a Sacred event that took place in a mythical past, "in the beginning".

Religious participation in a festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and re-integration of the mythical time reactualized by the festival itself. Hence Sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable. From one point of view it could be said that it does not "pass", that it does not constitute an irreversible duration. It is an ontological, Parmenidian time; it always remains equal to itself, it neither changes nor is exhausted. With each periodical festival, the participants find the same

sacred time - the same that had been manifested in the festival of the previous year or in the festival of a century earlier; it is the time that was created and sanctified by the gods at the period of their making of which the festival is precisely a reactualization.

Hence religious man lives in two kinds of time, of which the more important, Sacred time, appears under the paradoxical aspect of a circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of mythical present that is periodically re-integrated by means of rites. This attitude in regard to time suffices to distinguish religious man from non-religious man; the former refuses to live solely in what, in modern terms, is called the historical present; he attempts to regain a Sacred time that, from one point of view, can be homologized to eternity. Religious man experiences intervals of time that are "Sacred", that have no part in the temporal duration that precedes and follows them, that have a wholly different structure and origin, for they are of a primordial time, sanctified by the gods and capable of being made present by the festival.

This transhuman quality of liturgical time is inaccessible to a non-religious man, i.e. a profane man. For him, time can present neither break nor mystery; for him, time constitutes man's deepest existential dimension; it is linked to his own life, hence it has a beginning and an end, which is death, the annihilation of his life.

However many the temporal myths that he experiences, however great their differences in intensity, non-religious man knows that they always represent a human experience, in which there is no room for any divine presence."<sup>(4)</sup>

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(4) Ibid.



### 3.D RITUAL RELATED TO SACRED AND PROFANE SPACE AND TIME

Referring to Diagram No. 2 proposed in Section 3B and taking into consideration the nature and characteristics of the Sacred and profane space and time, it is now possible to relate the ritual that allowed 'entry' from profane space to Sacred space, or from a 'lower' state of consciousness to a 'higher' state.

This ritualistic 'entry' of time, or place of transition, also referred to as the 'territorial passage', gate, threshold or door, is the boundary between foreign or domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling; between the profane and Sacred worlds in the case of a temple or other holy ground. Therefore, to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world. This 'new world' is both on a physical and psychological plane.

C.G. Jung, in his book "Synchronicity - An Acausal Connecting Principle"<sup>(1)</sup>, hypothesizes that the western tradition with its cause and effect or insistent logical method, exemplified by its unparalleled success in the natural sciences, has brought the metaphysical view of the world into disrepute.

He proposes that the ancient Chinese religion/philosophy of the Tao is based on a Wholistic attitude that works synchronically and does not, therefore, rely upon cause and effectual relationship. "Tao is obscured when you

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(1) Jung, C.S. - Synchronicity - An Acausal Connecting Principle.

fix your eye on little segments of existence only."

Hence, in Jung's Synchronicity principle, it is possible to 'see' Wholistically in the imagination, dream or waking-dream worlds, and hence his involvement in research in the area of the Archetype. (Jung is mentioned here so as to explicate the fact that in many magical-religious rituals the psychological movement of the mind is from Diachronic to Synchronic modes of perception.)

Man has always erected boundaries and parameters, both physical and psychological, to denote the differences between one space and another, and between one state (of consciousness) and another.

These boundaries on the temporal and physical time and space plane, have established the right of ownership and hence power, or responsibility. Similarly, but differently, the boundaries or borders of a magico-religious space have denoted where an individual ritually passes from the profane space and linear time, through into the sacred space and circular time. Jane Harrison in "Ancient Art and Ritual", describes how various religious rituals of the ancient Greeks, through the loss of their efficacy, caused the Greeks to become spectators rather than participators of their ritual, over a period of time. An objectification of the "Dromenon" or "rites done" took place.

Gradually the authenticity of lived ritual in all its aspects; those of birth, puberty, adulthood and death; those of celebrating Spring and the other seasons to those of man's total relationship to animals and nature in general, are broken down.

In Early Christian and Mediaeval periods, similar rituals sustain themselves through the use of church decoration, liturgical artifacts and icons. During the Renaissance religious ritual with its ceremony and decoration also lost its efficacy and 'degenerated' into "art" of the Renaissance. Original meaning became transferred to political-economic and social status, and where art became, for the first time, really, the acquisition of a commodity and a means of social stratification.

As the original meaning of ritual became blurred and the conjunctive rites became lost, man began to transfer his ideals of the universal to inanimate objects such as books, paintings, sculpture, mural decoration, mosaic and architecture.

Jack Burnham in "Great Western Salt Works, p.151, writes;

"By living from generation to generation through the medium of objects around us, we create a series of surrogate styles and epistemological worlds, but even more important, we induce the permutative reduction of the Universals themselves.

Gradually the code is separated into little increments by our arts of historical progressivism. While the code is used daily in everyone's mental operations, we unknowingly dissect it historically into thousands of pieces for spiritual insight, entertainment and scientific advancement. In the human war between causality and synchronicity, causality slowly wins in the shape of culture and its inorganic handmaiden. Certain classes of objects become enormously valuable without us really knowing why; on the other hand, the word "ritual" becomes almost synonymous with boredom, tiring repetition, outdateness and meaninglessness. And the inversion is complete."

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this proposition we have seen how contemporary Western man, through the loss of conjunctive ecclesiastical ritual, sustained his connection to God and the cosmos through 'art' over the past 1 000 years, and that art and life were at one stage connected, if not intimately intertwined and seen as one.

It has also been noted that man, through his historical and linear progressivism and reductivism, created the Art/Life schism. It would appear that contemporary western art has come to its logical end - in the manifestation of exhibitions of empty galleries and blank canvasses. It must be mentioned here that in terms of the role of the artist, these art manifestations are totally in keeping with the linear historical reductivism and as such, the artists have executed their role correctly.

Through his excessive use of cause-and-effectual thinking, resulting in the scientific and empirical approach, as the only means of 'understanding' and hence identifying with his Physical and Spiritual worlds, Contemporary man has become overspecialized to the point where only parts in relation to parts are understood. No Wholistic overview has been inculcated into our entire Western Educational system.

The necessity for an all-embracing or inclusive model (wholistic) has been voiced and if not indeed, a model,

most certainly the necessity for a Wholistic religious view of Man and his cosmos.

Ritual originally gave Man his meaning, his "right"<sup>(1)</sup> relationship to all aspects of Life. Now on the brink of the 21st century, Man must find an appropriate contemporary equivalent of ancient ritual in a new re-sanctified structured living activity, in order that we may re-connect ourselves to that which underlies our existence.

If we as a species are to survive, we will have to work hand in hand with nature; a new, structured rationalization of all the earth's resources and their usages will have to be calculated. A greater, intense sensitivity towards nature will have to be inbred in our children, and a new social order established.

This new order could take the form of a social system that would catalyze and emphasize the individuality of each person, related to his inter-dependence on society as a whole.

Hypothetically it would be based on the re-sanctification of the world and the individual in that "right" and harmonious relationships between man and nature would be re-established.

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(1) See Suzanne Langer - Philosophy in a New Key, p.153.

In terms of the writer's model, any social order that were to 'structure' man mechanistically through dogma, backed by might, would be entirely unacceptable.

A new awareness and a re-awakening of the metaphysical in life, as Jung reminds us, is of vital importance, and that those recognitions of stages and states of Man be restructured into our daily lives, both on the Physical and Spiritual planes of existence. At this stage in the future, and only at this stage, will the Art/Life schism be reconciled through the appropriate ritualized and structured living activity.

PART TWO

PROCEDURAL PROCESSES INVOLVED

IN THE EXECUTION OF THE

PRACTICAL WORK



## 5. PREFATORY NOTE

At first sight the author could be wrongfully accused of eclecticism and the misappropriation of the symbols occurring in the practical work, and their subsequent exploitation, and not seen as a personal ontogenesis. At the outset, therefore, it must be clearly stated that the theoretical research, combined with the relevant analysis, ran concurrently with the execution of the practical work, and that the latter was not executed according to the extraction of information and theoretically gained knowledge.

On the contrary, it was through the personal experiential observation of the ontological in man and nature that the practical process was established, and as such it must be clearly stated that the symbols that occur in the paintings arise out of the author's own intellectual and intuitive responses to Reality, and are subsequently substantiated by the concomitant research.

## 6. INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 the examination of the Art/Life schism was outlined, and introduced the writer's necessity to seek and construct a personal wholistic approach to life and art that would supply an adequately meaningful model on the Physical and Spiritual planes of Reality. This resulted in the research of the attributes of the Sacred and the Profane, linked to the ritual approach as a means of establishing and stabilising 'total' living patterns.

It was noted that these meaningful rituals, inclusive of symbols, through time lost their efficacy, giving rise to contemporary Spiritual disorientation and artistic confusion.

As a result of this observation, it was suggested that re-orientation could be established through the restructuring of living activities, which would essentially necessitate man finding a contemporary equivalent of past conjunctive rituals. These conjoining modes would have to be ritualized and ordered on both the Physical and Spiritual planes, together with the 'right' relationship between the two.

"A mind that is orientated, no matter by what conscious or unconscious symbols, in material and social realities, can function freely and confidently even under

great pressure of circumstance and in the face of hard problems. Its life is a smooth and skillful shuttling to and fro between sign functions and symbolic functions; a steady interweaving of sensory interpretations, linguistic responses, inferences, memories, imaginative prevision, factual knowledge and tacit appreciations. Dreams can possess it at night and work off the heaviest load of self-expressive needs, and evaporate before the light of day; its further self-expression being woven intelligently into the nexus of practical behavior. Ritual comes to it as a natural response to the 'holiness' or importance of real occasions. In such a mind, doubts of the 'meaning of life' are not apt to rise, for reality itself is intrinsically meaningful; it incorporates the symbols of Life and Death, Sin and Salvation. For a balanced active intelligence, reality is an historical fact and significant form; the all-inclusive realm of science, myth, art and comfortable common sense."<sup>(1)</sup>

"Life that does not incorporate some degree of ritual, of gesture and attitude, has no mental anchorage."<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Suzanne Langer - "Philosophy in a New Key", p.289.

(2) Ibid., p.290.

In the practical and concurrent theoretical research, the need arose for further enquiry into the nature of Symbolism which naturally included a personal re-evaluation of the notion of Dualism and which also included Jung's Synchronicity principle. After having partially comprehended some of the personally vital aspects mentioned above, the next natural step was to re-examine the formal means of expressing these comprehensions and experiences, and this led in turn to the re-examination of, amongst others, the use of colour, gesturalism, the painting surface as a Sacred space, the nature of materiality in art and the art object as personal ritual.

This personal aspiration towards understanding and ultimately identification with the Spiritual world, culminated in the final works, using the vertical 'AXIS MUNDI' as a personal symbol as a possible means of entry into the Sacred.

The enquiry and due consideration of the nature and characteristics of the Personal Wholistic model governing the apprehension and perception modes, and their consequent relationship to the execution of the paintings, was of utmost importance to the writer during the exploratory practical stage. The experience gained, based on this enquiry, and the consequent provisional conclusion, in correlation with the corresponding intuitions, influenced the intentional use of symbols in the practical

work. They, because of their very nature, had the innate potential to reveal the various attributes and concomitants of the spiritual and the Universal.

This potential was either to a greater or lesser degree manifested and, as always, was determined by the 'quality' of the paintings themselves.

## 7. SIGNAL, SIGN AND SYMBOL

The writer deemed it necessary to study relevant areas in Semiology and Symbolism in the course of his research, although it is not within the scope of this practical thesis to explicate in detail the characteristics and attributes of semiotic structures and symbols in relation to the practical work. However, it will help to distinguish between the three primary modes of communication; those of (1) SIGNAL, (2) SIGN and (3) SYMBOL, and also to include cursory notes on Symbolism.

The following has been paraphrased from an article by Lawrence K. Frank:

"There is an enormous literature dealing with symbols, and the word "symbol" has been used with many different meanings and in different contexts. Over the centuries there has been prolonged and intensive controversy over symbols, especially by those who have reified symbols, attributing to them a reality superior to the actual world of our sensory awareness. More recently, the role and functioning of symbols have been examined and illuminated by Alfred North Whitehead, by Ernst Cassirer, and by Suzanne Langer, who, along with Cassirer, has asserted that the urgent problems of philosophy are

primarily those of symbol use and recognition. Earlier, Hans Vaihinger, a German philosopher, proposed recognition of the "Als ob" or "As if" world in which human living takes place.

The terms "signals" and "signs", like the word "symbol", have been used by different writers with different meanings. Some writers limit their discussion to signals and signs, others to signs and symbols, so that there is no established uniform usage for these terms.

In his lecture on symbolism, Alfred North Whitehead asserted a distinction between "pure instinctive action, reflex action and symbolically conditioned action", thereby recognizing three kinds of responses to messages, such as signals, signs and symbols.

Further support for a threefold classification of messages as signals, signs and symbols is found in the words of Cassirer:

'Symbols - in the proper sense of this term - cannot be reduced to mere signs. Signals and symbols belong to two different universes of discourse: a signal is a part of the physical world of being; a symbol is a part of the human world of meaning. Signals are operators; symbols are designators.'

Arthur F. Bentley accepted three kinds of messages, which he described in his paper, "Kennetic Inquiry":

'Within the range of the sign, the word SIGNAL was chosen to name the underlying sensoriperceptive level; the word DESIGNATION for the next higher evolutionary level, namely that of linguistic sign operation; and the word SYMBOLING for a still higher range in the evolutionary sense ...

The word signal was adapted for the lowest stratum of behaviours largely because of Pavlov's increasing employment of it as his skill and breadth of vision increased ...

The word designation is used as the name for the next higher level of behavior ... designations are subdivided into cue, characterisation, and specifications as stages in evolutionary growths ...

Symbolings evolve out of designatings and operate to increase the efficiency of signalings ... the surviving logics of their past and their reconstructions of today, including most of symbolic logic, still operate under a confusion of symbolings with designatings, and with signaling as well.'

Because of these many confusions and the often conflicting definition of symbols, it may be permissible, therefore, to use these three terms as identifying different kinds of messages from, and responses to, the world. Thus we find the basic SIGNALS emitted by whatever exists or occurs embracing the wide range of what we call physical, chemical, and biological messages and also varied



radiations and vibrations to which all organisms are exposed. To these we must then add the many different SIGNS which have been learned from experience and have become signifiers or designators. Finally, we must recognize the almost unlimited array of man-made SYMBOLS, emphasizing that symbols are human creations by which man has established and maintained his varied cultural worlds, transforming the geographical and biological world of signals and signs into a world of meanings and values which he himself has imposed or projected upon the world and thereby has been able to create and maintain a human way of living. Symbols, of which there are many varieties, are genuinely human creations that never existed in the world before men invented them, like tools which man invented for manipulating materials so that they could be used as instruments for specific purposes."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Lawrence K. Frank, from "Sign, Image and Symbol", edited by Gyorgy Kepes, p.1.

## 8. INVERTED SIGNS

Symbols have also acted as "inverted"<sup>(1)</sup> signs in that they denote the specific values and relationships on both the spiritual planes pertaining to the various periods and civilizations which they signified. As such, symbols signified the actual civilizations in terms of the subject-matter as of the art-works themselves.

Consequently, it became apparent to the author that his use of Universal or Archetypal symbols also signified the specific physical reality in which they were painted. This was due to the personalized and subjective manner in which the paintings were formally articulated.

Generally in the 20th Century it may be observed that contemporary western man no longer participates in organized religion, and therefore still largely depends upon the arts for the conjunctive rites that religious ritual previously afforded. J.E. Cirlot states that: "Symbolism occurs when natural religions are degenerating".<sup>(2)</sup>

It is largely through this dependence on art that contemporary man has been exposed to the signs and symbols that could supply his unification and identification with the Temporal and Spiritual spheres.

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(1) J.E. Cirlot - "A Dictionary of Symbols", p.11.

(2) See "Sign and Symbol" - Jacques Maritain - "Journal of Warburg Institute", 1937-38, (1965), p.10.

Herbert Read states:

"Man it has been said, is a symbolizing animal; it is evident that at no stage in the development of civilization has man been able to dispense with symbols. Science and technology have not freed man from his dependence on symbols; indeed it might be argued that they have increased his need for them."<sup>(3)</sup>

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(3) Ibid., Foreword by Herbert Read.

## 9. SYMBOLS

In the past we have observed the necessity for man to engage in ritual in order to complement and sustain his Life-Symbols, and that it is these symbols that charge his inner-life with meaning -

"A rite regularly performed is the constant reiteration of sentiments toward 'first and last things'; it is not a free expression of emotions, but a disciplined rehearsal of 'right attitudes'." (1)

The Life-Symbols referred to above operate on both the Phenomenal and Noumenal planes of existence. What is of primary concern here are those symbols which are concerned with the Spiritual and with Universals.

Jack Burnham in "Great Western Salt Works" states:

"Universals account for the formation of three basic types of human communication: speech, gesture and iconicity. All forms of human facturing are surrogates for these fundamental means of communication ...  
The primary symbols of many organized religions constitute a formal or geometric

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(1) Suzanne Langer - "Philosophy in a New Key", p.153.

basis for the system of universals controlling human thought. Symbols are containers of the various levels of knowledge. They represent metaphysical insight into the organizing principle of life itself. At their most condensed, and when logically understood for what they are, symbols possess enormous power as sources of psychic energy. They recapitulate the ontology of natural growth, and more specifically, the evolution of the human race and the intellectual and emotional development of every child."<sup>(2)</sup>

George A. Kubler states:

"The symbolic world arises and is perpetuated in and through the individuals who constitute the cultural group and use their familiar culturally derived symbols for maintaining their social order and for patterning their behavior into the required conduct and relationships. The written records and other graphic symbols, the monuments and buildings, all the artifacts by which symbolic meanings are maintained through time, are dependent upon human observers and interpreters for their operation as symbols. All over the world people have left symbols

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(2) Jack Burnham - "Great Western Salt Works", p.149.

which cannot be deciphered or interpreted because there are no living persons to provide the meaning for those symbols when they were in use."<sup>(3)</sup>

Lawrence K. Frank writes:

"Symbols, it must be emphasised, cannot and do not alter the world, but operate in and through the human actors who perceptually have learned to transform the world according to the meanings of the symbols by which they pattern their perceptions of the world and evaluate its possibilities. By symbolizing the world, man acts like a Maxwellian demon, selectively establishing and maintaining a more or less orderly, meaningful world as he imaginatively conceives and perceives it, amid the seemingly random flux of events."<sup>(4)</sup>

Knowing may be seen as essentially the recognition, interpretation and response to the symbols by which the world is identified and made meaningful and understandable in terms of the basic concepts and

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(3) George A. Kubler - "The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things", New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1962.

(4) Lawrence K. Frank - "Sign, Image and Symbol", ed. Gyorgy Kepes, p.8.

assumptions of each culture. Knowing is therefore an active transactional process established by a knower with the known or the to be known. Much of what we consider as evidence of intelligence is the capacity for symbol recognition and response, although many nonsymbolic performances may be highly intelligent and exceedingly skillful."<sup>(5)</sup>

"Through the three traditional systems of art, science and theology, we attempt to rationalize the non-rational, and make it possible for each individual to develop his own psycho-logic and his own religion. But the professional guardians of these three symbol systems jealously protect their own domains, criticizing and rejecting the others because they do not meet the criteria established for each of these symbol systems.

We live as humans by and for symbols. When the symbol systems that we have relied upon to transform nature and human nature into a meaningful cultural world are in conflict and lose their once unquestioned and unquestionable acceptability, then indeed we are faced with a cultural crisis as variously described in terms of the existentialist

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(5) Ibid., p.9.

crisis, which can be resolved only as we can reconcile and articulate the symbol systems of art, science and theology. As we recognize and more fully understand these symbol systems, which man himself has created for establishing his various cultural worlds and providing fulfillment of his varied potentialities, we will see that we have the needed instrumentalities for the cultural renewal we must undertake."<sup>(6)</sup>

To quote Whitehead:

"The art of free society consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code; and secondly, in fearlessness of revision, to secure that the code serves those purposes which satisfy an enlightened reason. Those societies which cannot combine reverence for their symbols with freedom of revision, must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows."<sup>(7)</sup>

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(6) Ibid., p.14.

(7) Alfred North Whitehead - "Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect", New York, Macmillan (1927).



10. ANALYSIS AND PROCEDURAL PROCESSES  
OF THE PRACTICAL WORK

The wholistic model in Part 1 serves as the exemplar which gave rise to the due consideration, in an experiential form, of the creative process in the execution of the practical work; and which involved the examination of the following aspects which are listed chronologically in terms of the working procedure:

- (i) Dualism: the use of polar opposites in art and life.
- (ii) Symbols: the nature and use of both personal and Universal symbols.
- (iii) Gesture as expression and non-gesture-'marking'-time.
- (iv) Synchronicity and Diachronicity: a subjective enquiry into the nature of causal and acausal thinking through the medium of linear time.
- (v) Illusory and actual Space.
- (vi) The art-work as Sacred Space.
- (vii) The object as personal ritual.
- (viii) Axis Mundi as an exemplar.
- (ix) Objecthood and Materiality.
- (x) The art-work as ritual for the observer.

The body of practical work executed comprises 47 works and consists of three stages:

- A. Investigatory and precursory stage;
- B. Intermediate stage, and
- C. Conclusion.

# 10.A INVESTIGATORY AND PRECURSORY STAGE

This stage consists of seven individual groups and comprises twenty-nine paintings in all. These 29 works, which are a selection from over 150, have been chosen as being representative of the seven groups listed below:

## Slide Numbers

1-5	A(i)	The initial paintings establishing the enquiry into Dualism and Triadicity.
6-9	A(ii)	Further examination of Dualism incorporating the utilization of symbols.
10-13	A(iii)	A personal review of the Expressionist gesture.
14-17	A(iv)	Synchronicity - Diachronicity. Conscious marking of the canvas 'in' time. 'Non-expressionist' gesture.
18-21	A(v)	The emphasis of symbols in relation to their various contextualizations.
22-25	A(vi)	The two and three-dimensional spiral.
26-29	A(vii)	Two-dimensionality related to Materiality.

## 10.B INTERMEDIATE STAGE

This stage consists of three individual groups and comprises nine works in all:

Slide

- |       |        |  |
|-------|--------|--|
| 30-32 | B(i)   | Introduction of colour as expression, incorporating the symbol.  |
| 33-37 | B(ii)  | Employment of the grid as a means of personal ritual 'colouring', in Sacred space. Use of illusionistic space related to the materiality of paint. |
| 38    | B(iii) | The 'Retinal' stimulus related to symbol.  |

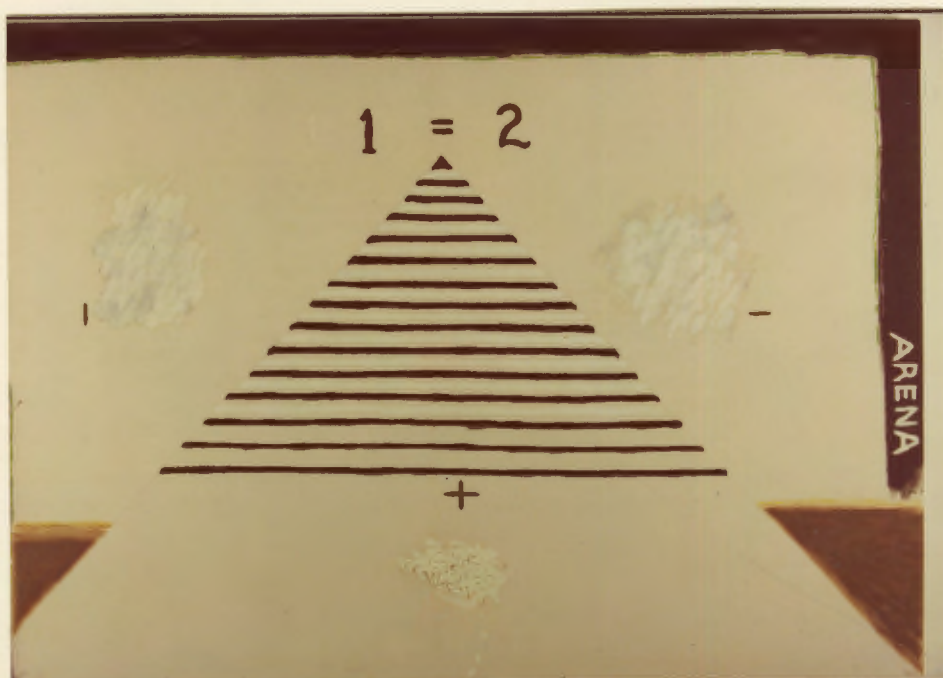
## 10.C CONCLUDING WORKS

This stage consists of four groups and comprises 9 works in all:

- |       |        |   |
|-------|--------|---|
| 39-41 | C(i)   | The introduction of three-dimensional elements, related to the use of the symbolic rather than 'aesthetic' colour. Symmetry. Axis Mundi, or the pole of 'THE CENTRE'. |
| 42    | C(ii)  | The art object as assemblage of elements: asymmetry.  |
| 43-46 | C(iii) | Painted art-object: Materiality: three-dimensionality: Objecthood.  |

Slide  
Number

47	C(iv)	Art-object as framework and emotional 'field' for participatory 'ritual' by the observer. Axis Mundi as separate Ritual Object.
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10.A INVESTIGATORY AND PRECURSORY STAGE

Slide  
Number      A(i)

- 1      This group of four paintings constitutes the initial enquiry and established the provisional parameters; "THE ARENA", in which the investigation took place. Within this arena or "Sphere of action"<sup>(1)</sup> (the edges of the canvas), the image of the pyramid referred to the historical beginnings of Western Culture and symbolises
- 2      the roots of the logical and discursive tradition. The number three "implying resolution"<sup>(2)</sup> as signified by the three distinctly separate entities in the black column-like images, imply indirectly the triad or triangle, which in turn can be seen as the 'working' procedure for the circle.

Cirlot writes of the triangle:

- 1,3      "The geometric image of the ternary and, in the symbolism of numbers, equivalent to the number three. In its highest sense it concerns the Trinity. In its normal position with the apex uppermost it also symbolizes fire and the aspiration of all things towards the higher unity - the urge to escape from extension

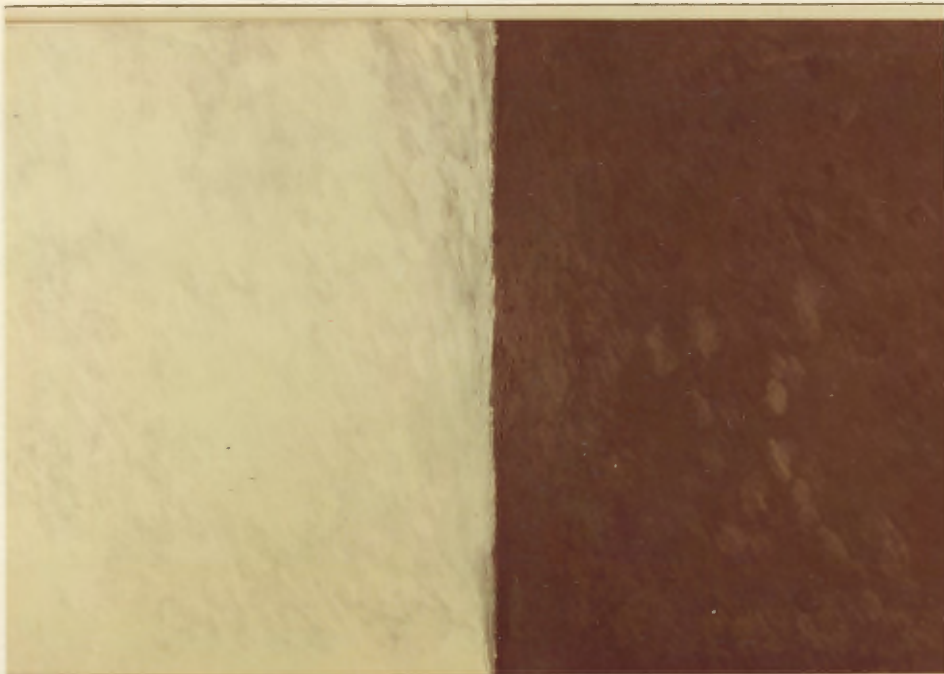
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(1) Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, p.66.

(2) J.E. Cirlot - Dictionary of Symbols, p.279.



3



4



(signified by the base) into non-extension  
 (the apex) or towards the Origin on the  
 Irradiating Point." (3)

The age-old enquiry of the precise relationship between Spirit and Matter and the significance of form, gave rise to the Cabbalist's use of "What is above is like what is below", which Goethe confirmed by adding: "What is within"- the idea - "is also without" - the form. (4)

3,4 Above and below are apparently dualist reflections of  
 each other. Expression of the conflict between opposites  
 5 is expressed by means of emotive force and "struggle",  
 in the formal usage of paint. An attempt was made to  
 'enter', to identify with the three aspects as one;  
 the unity. Cirlot states of this ternary system that it:

"is created by the emergence of a third  
 (latent) element which so modifies the  
 binary situation as to impart to it a  
 dynamic equilibrium. As Jung observed  
 Plotinus with his characteristic combina-  
 tion of philosophical precision and poetic  
 allusiveness, compared oneness (the creative  
 principle) with light, intellect with the  
 sun, and the world-soul with the moon.  
 Unity is split internally into three 'moments'

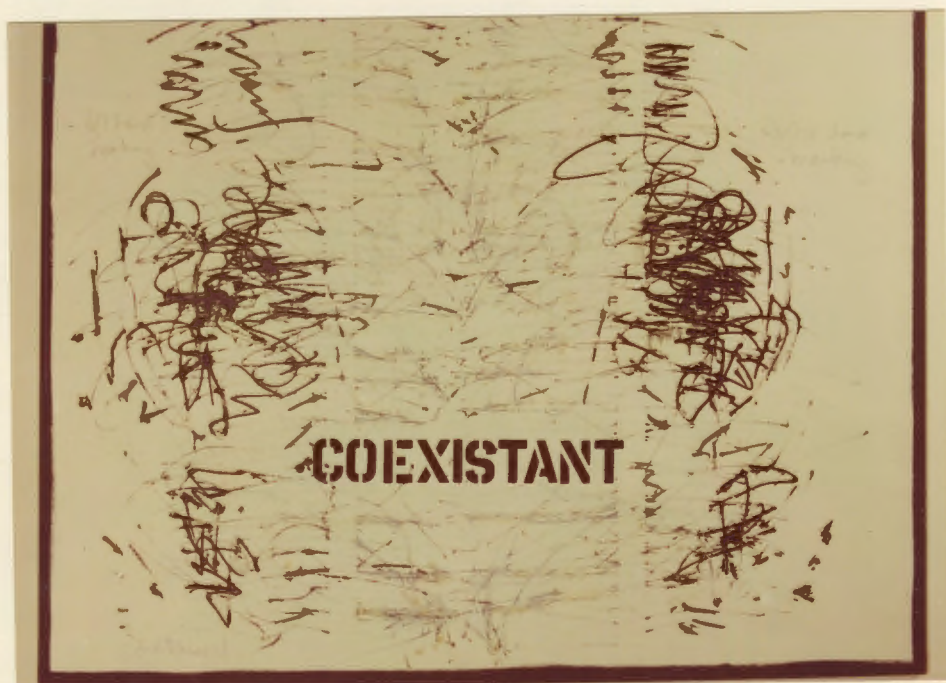
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(3) Ibid., p.332.

(4) Ibid., p.278.



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6

- the active, the passive and the union or outcome of these two. Undoubtedly, the vital, human significance of the number three and the ternary embraces the multi-secular origins of biological evolution.

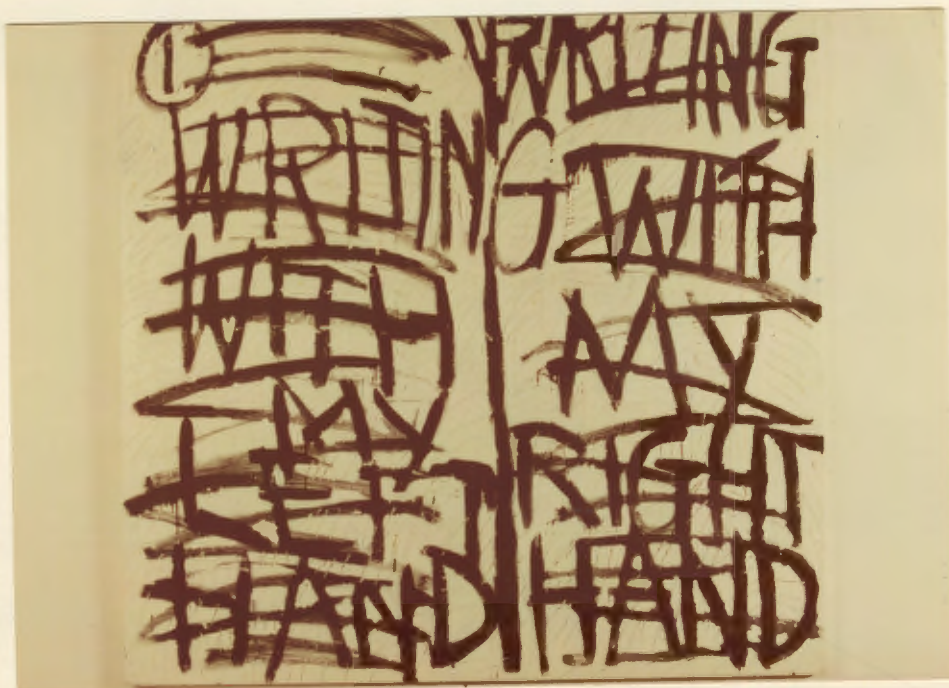
As Lao Tse says: "One engenders two, two engenders three three engenders all things." Hence three has the power to resolve the conflict posed by dualism; it is also the harmonic resolution of the impact of unity upon duality. It symbolizes the creation of Spirit out of matter, of the active out of the passive ... it comes to be related to the 'Three Worlds' (the celestial, terrestrial and infernal), in turn closely connected with the three-part division of man into spirit (the impalpable or the mind) the soul (sentiments), and body (the instincts), and with the moral categories of the good, the indifferent and the bad ... in alchemy these stages are symbolized by the colours red, white and black."<sup>(5)</sup>

6 The deliniation of the edges of the canvas supplied the 'arena', the place, where the objective/subjective act of 'painting'/drawing/marking the surface concurrently with two tubes of paint, one in the left hand and one

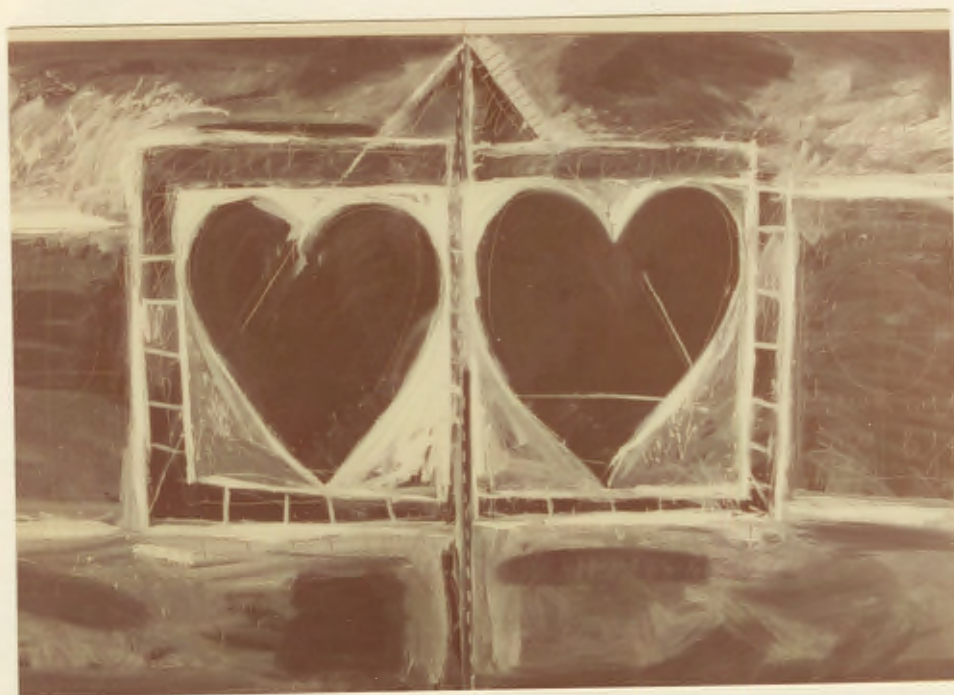
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(5) Ibid., p.318.





7



8

in the right, took place. The 'marking' is not so much expressive, as the personal 'watching' or observation of the act as one external to the self. Both hands followed simultaneous and 'equal' movement on the surface. The act was essentially intellectual and self-referential. The 'ANT' of the word 'COEXISTANT' was intentional; AN'T from 'are not'.<sup>(6)</sup> That is, not the two hands, two acts, but one, the self 'acting' as 'two'.

A(ii) Further Examination of Dualism Incorporating the Utilization of Symbols

- 7 The subdividing of the surface into vertically symmetrical halves established the two areas for action where a similar process of objective observation took place in the 'watching' of the act of writing. Metaphorically the endeavour was to refer to, and 'question' the nature of the aspects of self, that is, the Material and the Spiritual.
- 8 The use of 'blackboard' black paint, as with many other paintings that followed, was chosen for the associative and didactic purpose of engendering in the mind of the observer, the teach/learn situation. The 'teaching' was rather the presentation of an image for contemplation, than a direct discourse, with obvious empirical 'facts'.

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(6) Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, p.51.

This work comprises a number of double sets, two hands - left and right 'tracings', two hearts, two circles, two crosses, two squares, two halves and the words: male, female. The underlying symbol, the triangle is, together with the symbol of the heart - the conjunctive symbol of love, the coming together, the means of reconciling the apparent paradox of opposites - dualism.

- 8 On the bottom right of the work are the words 'apparent paradox', i.e. that in terms of the Yin-Yang principle of the Taoists, the apparent opposites are reconcilable, or rather are seen as aspects of each other within the greater context in which they are supported; i.e. the circle or unity; Unity begets the two.

"Dualism" is defined as any system which implies a binary pattern, but which is characterized less by a complementary thesis and antithesis tending to resolve into a synthesis than by two opposed principles.

R. Bertrand in 'La Tradition Secrète', with reference to the Yin-Yang symbol, observes:

"The dualism of religion (or of mystic or cosmic philosophy) is theoretical or superficial; in fact, there is always something extra - a third term which prevents the two opposing terms from cancelling each other out, forcing both these force-principles



to yield, that is, to function alternately and not simultaneously. Thus, the black and white of the Yin-Yang bounded by the circle of stability, T'ai - chi, combine to form, in effect, a ternary system, the Tao." (7)

8 The duplication of the elements in the painting, work

"like the reflection in the mirror, a symbol of consciousness - an echo of reality. It corresponds to the symbolism of the number two." (8)

At this point it might be interesting to state that Jasper Johns' recent stripe paintings contain aspects based on the principle of reflection and duplication.

9 The origin of the heart was derived from two sources; firstly, through the 'creative play' with the image of the triangle - (by inversion and re-drawing, the heart-symbol emerged), and secondly, through Duchamp's use of 'Rose Selavy', the anglicised version and pun on Eros, c'est la vie - the love, it is the life.

This could possibly be translated metaphorically as; Love, the conjoining principle of two or many, is the

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(7) J.E. Cirlot - Dictionary of Symbols, p.86.

(8) Ibid., p.87.



means to the Life, that is, the Metaphysical Life. The emergence of this symbol was the result of both the intuitive response and cognition to the former primary experience of 'play', combined with the intellectual consideration of Duchamp's pun.

- 9 'No above, No below', an obvious contradiction related to the image, where an 'horizon' denotes above and below is, for the observer's consideration in terms of the Yin-Yang principle, where the heart being the third element in the ternary principle, reconciles opposites and unity is again established.

This work introduced the following stage, that of expressionist gesture; the use of inner emotional and intuitive feelings was 'acted out' formally, in the attempt to reconcile 'the above and below' through the use of the heart, both metaphorically and actually, through the painting act itself.

A(iii) A Personal Review of the Expressionist Gesture and 'Automatism'

Barbara Rose writes about "Psychic Automatism", that:

"By the means of this technique, the poet or artist allowed his thoughts or hand to wander spontaneously, much as the hand moves at random on the Ouija board, and to meander in strange paths unchecked by the fetters of



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11

reason or logic. The purpose of automatism was to allow the subconscious to generate buried images unavailable to the conscious mind. Ostensibly no attempt was made to control these idle doodlings which might then serve as points of departure for more conscious configurations ...

This aspect of automatism - its stress on process as central to creativity - was taken over by the Abstract Expressionists who gradually changed the emphasis from the process of inventing and generating images to the process of painting itself."<sup>(9)</sup>

"And, if Gorky and de Kooning fought to free their art from the binding strictures of cubism through the agent of emotional expression, Pollock's task was to find a means of ordering raw feeling. Gorky's and de Kooning's triumphs were in the ultimate release of hidden energy; Pollock's lay in wresting a transcendent order from primordial chaos."<sup>(10)</sup>

The above quotes serve to restate certain basic premises and the context from which this group of works originate. The highly conscious and intellectual stance employed in

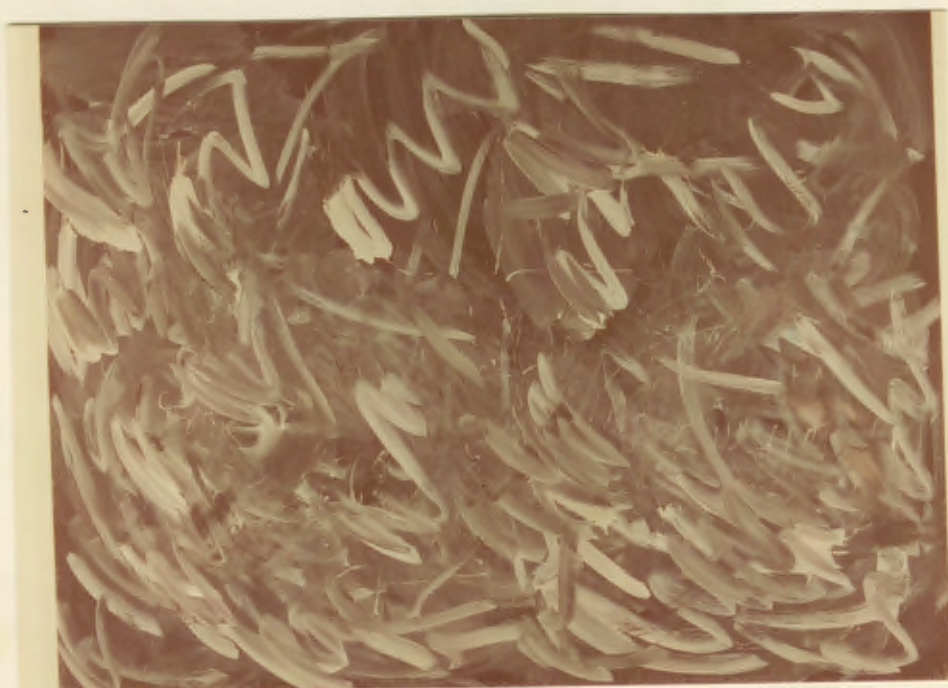
10,11  
12,13

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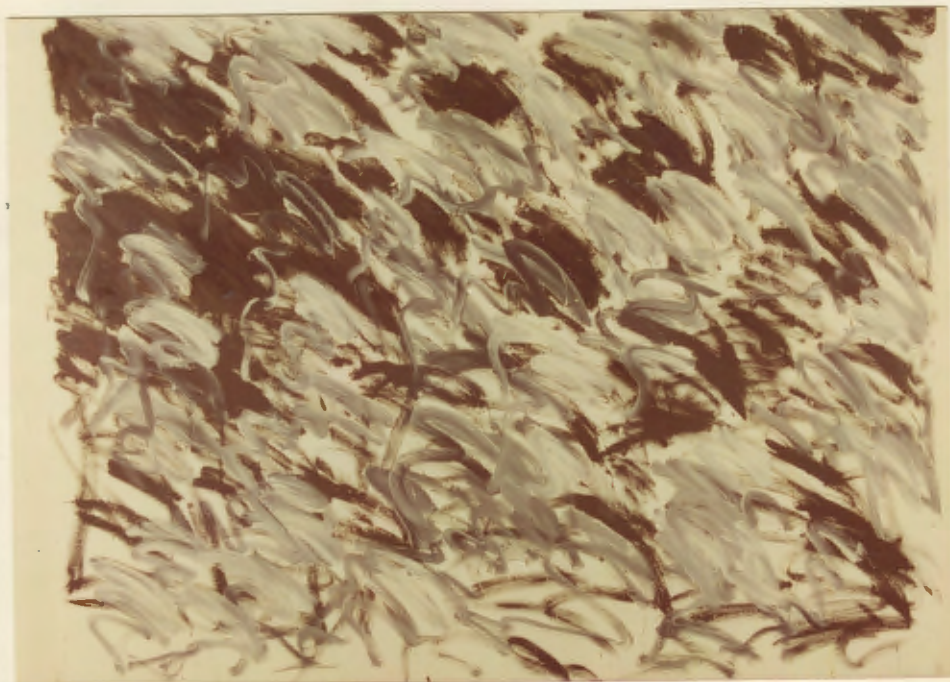
(9) Barbara Rose - "American Art Since 1960", p.165.

(10) Ibid., p.173.





12



13

6,7 the previous stage, A(ii), necessitated the author's  
 8,9 re-examination of feeling and expression through the  
 use of the gesture. The progression from total  
 10 'subjectivity', derived from internal responses, gradu-  
 13 ally evolved to the last work of this group, where a  
 more relatively 'objective' state of mind occurred.

The 'objective gesture' was personally observed and  
 encouraged during the execution and could be construed  
 as 'marking' rather than expressing. As such, it was  
 personally considered as a 'non-gesture'; a deliberate  
 'marking' in real time.

The act alters its emphasis from the expressive and  
 experiential to a personal ritualistic mode through the  
 repetition of 'marking' and where no attempt at the  
 generally accepted 'aesthetic' was made.

10,11 The experience of these four works culminated in the  
 12,13 conscious decision, whereby, using a format as a means  
 of repetition, the expressive and intuitive could co-  
 exist, with the logical or rational states of mind.  
 This decision gave rise to stage A(iv).

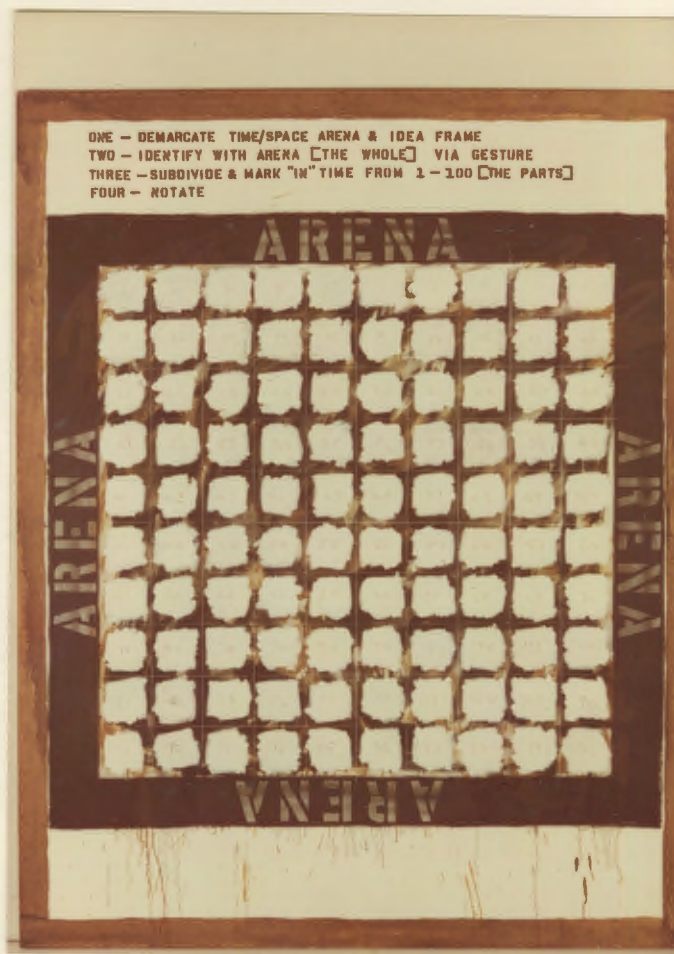
A(iv) Synchronicity and Diachronicity - 'Marking  
 in Time'

14,15 "Synchronicity takes the co-incidence of  
 16,17 events in space and time as meaning some-  
 thing more than mere chance, namely, a





14



15

peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers ... a point of view diametrically opposed to that of causality. Since the latter is merely a statistical truth and not an absolute, it is a sort of working hypothesis of how events evolve one out of the other..."(11)

"The central concept in that definition lies in the phrase,

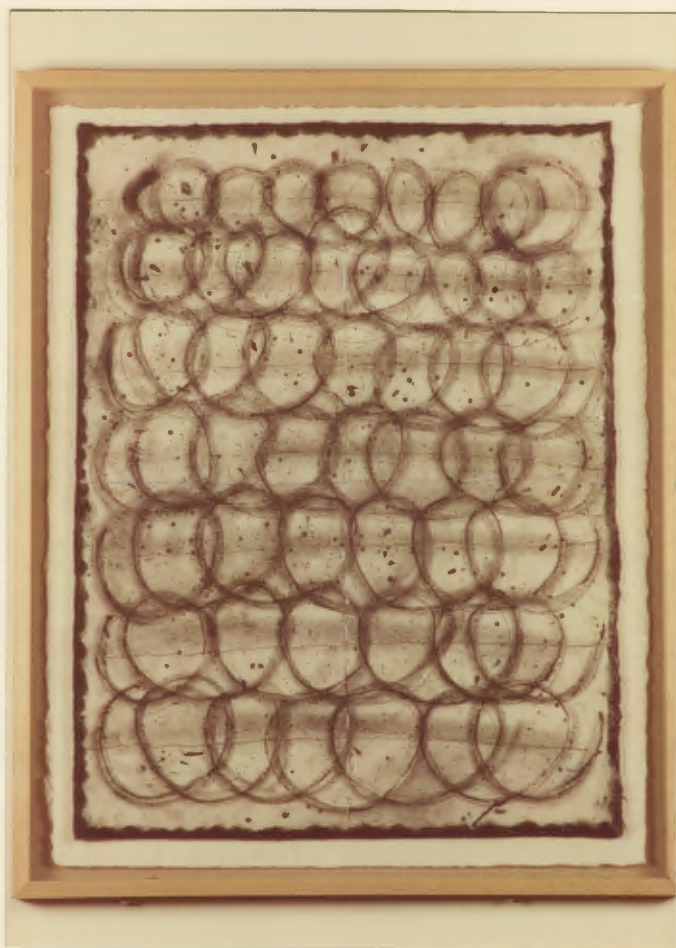
'Synchronicity takes the co-incidence of events in space and time as meaning something more than mere chance'.

Perhaps a more indicative word than 'co-incidence' would be 'concurrence', since the central thought concerns the occurrence at the same moment of two separate events that are not causally connected to one another. They take place at the same time with neither one having an effect on the other, and yet they are related to one another in a meaningful way. This is the principle that underlies the use of the "I Ching". It calls upon two separate events occurring at a single moment and draws great meaning from

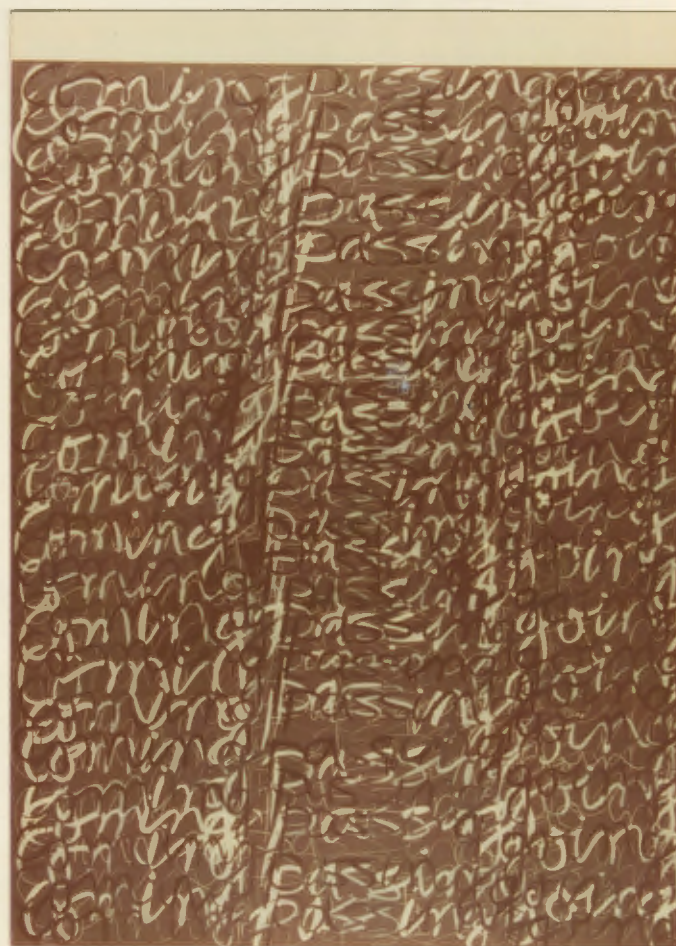
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(11) See C.G. Jung - "Richard Wilhelm: An Obituary in Collected Works", Vol. xv.





16



17



them, even though there is no cause - and -  
effect relationship between the events." (12)

Progressing from the primarily conscious approach of group A(ii) through the intuitive gesture in A(iii), to the present conscious stage in A(iv), and considering the nature of linear thinking in terms of Diachronicity and its polar opposite Synchronicity, we may observe the nature of Dualism at work in the oscillation of the working procedure from the conscious to the intuitive and back again to the conscious.

14,15  
16,17

The quotation by Progoff can serve quite naturally in a limited capacity, to contextualize the working procedure of these paintings; for as the enquiry progressed and became more complex, it necessitated yet another area for research, that of number theory and symbolic numerology. Further investigation dealing with number gave rise to the proposition; that there exists "a relation of number to time" (13), and that number has a qualitative character;

"thus we define number psychologically as  
an archetype of order which has become  
conscious." (14)

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(12) Ira Progoff - "Jung, Synchronicity and Human Destiny", p.23.

(13) Marie-Louise von Franz - "Number and Time", p.41.

(14) Ibid., p.45.

This archetype of number also has its two complementary poles; the empirical quantitative or abstract structural aspect of the number series of the West and more qualitative, symbolic and Wholistic aspects of the East.

Ferdinand Gonseth, the Swiss mathematician, helped formulate an attitude of reconciliation between these two approaches (Eastern and Western), by stating that

"mathematics exists in a field of knowledge which lies between two complementary poles; one, the world of reality, called exterior; the other, interior. These two worlds are transcendental, i.e. beyond consciousness. They cannot be perceived 'in themselves' but only by the traces which they leave in the field of our conscious." (15)

Jung, like Gonseth, remarks that:

"Matter and spirit both appear in the psychic realm as distinctive qualities of conscious contents. The ultimate nature of both is transcendental, that is, irrepresentational, since the psyche and its contents are the only reality which is imparted directly to us." (16)

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(15) Marie-Louise von Franz - "Number and Time", p.37.

(16) Ibid., p.37.

"According to Jung, number appears to play an exact relation in both spheres. Number forms not only an essential aspect of every material manifestation, but is just as much a product of the mind (meaning the dynamic aspect of the unconscious psyche). It appears in our mental processes as a purely archetypal preconscious basic structure." (17)

14,15 In all four works a preconceived format and procedure  
16,17 was established: as in the use of the grid, and through the conscious use of linear time, an attempt was made to 'penetrate the present'\*. Having no complex content to consider, the same element was repeated to the stage of completion.

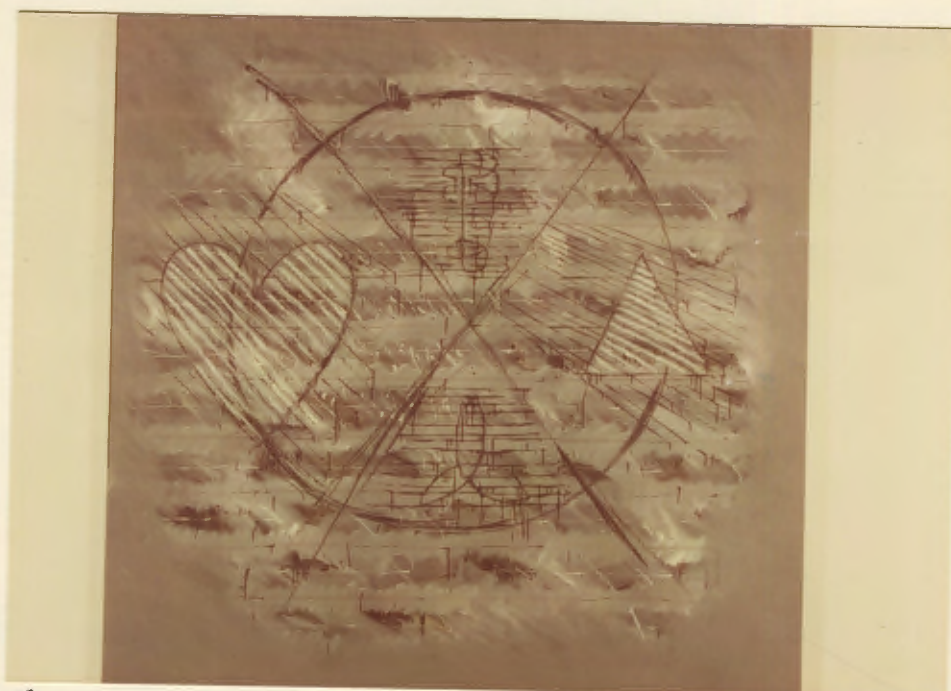
14 This procedure catalysed a state of consciousness which did not follow a strict sequentiality or a cause-and-effectual relationship, but rather a 'dream state' in which 'linear' time\*\* became absent. In this state, the painting took on a 'whole' image and, even though 'parts' were sequentially added, the image at each stage appeared complete. A similar 'experiment' was undertaken

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(17) Ibid., p.37.

\* In the sense of concentrating fully on each present moment during the creative act, and without consideration to past marks or thoughts.

\*\* 'Linear' time is used here to denote the awareness of the moving of time; in terms of past, present and future.



18



19

- 15 in 'Arena', where 'marking' sequentially provided a state of relative 'self completion' in the present. As such, this group provided a private ritual through the use of the acausal approach by means of repetition.

#### A(v) Contextual Relationship of Symbols

- 18,19 The symbol in isolation apparently has its own set of  
20,21 Universal attributes; the context in which it is situated, alters and establishes different correspondences between it and other juxtaposed symbols or elements. This observation resulted in the author using various combinatorial relationships between sets of similar and differing symbols, using number, size, execution, contrast, colour and position as the varying formal elements. This produced varying emphases and consequent insights into the experience of the symbols themselves.

- 18,19 The four paintings concerned here, contain the heart  
20,21 and the triangle as the primary elements and symbols, which in each case are contextualized by the addition of other symbols, establishing different 'hierarchies of importance' in their relationships to the whole.

As the characteristics of the triangle, ternary systems and the number three have been previously outlined, it is now necessary to describe a few attributes and correspondences of the heart symbol.





20



21

"In the vertical scheme of the human body, the focal points are three in number: the brain, the heart, and in consequence it comes to partake of the meanings of the other two. The heart was the only part of the viscera left by the Egyptians in the mummy, since it was regarded as the centre indispensable to the body in eternity; for all centres are symbols of eternity, since time is the motion of the periphery of the wheel of phenomena rotating around the Aristotelian 'unmoved mover'. In traditional ways of thought, the heart was taken as the true seat of intelligence, the brain being merely instrumental; hence, in ancient attempts to explain the profound and continuing analogies between concepts, the moon was said to correspond to the brain and the sun to the heart. All representations of the 'Centre' have been related in some way to the heart, either through correspondences or through substitution, as in the case of the goblet, the coffer and the cavern. For the alchemists, the heart was the image of the sun within man, just as gold was the image of the sun on earth. The importance of love in the mystic doctrine of unity explains how it is that love-symbolism came to be closely linked

with heart-symbolism, for to love is only to experience a force which urges the lover towards a given centre. In emblems, then, the heart signifies love as the centre of illumination and happiness, and this is why it is surmounted by flames, or a cross, or a fleur-de-lis, or a crown."(18)

The heart is also related to the hearth, both being centres of warmth and happiness. The hearth is "a form of 'domestic sun', a symbol of the home, of the conjunction of the masculine principle (fire) with the feminine (the receptacle), and consequently, of love."\*

20,21 The use of the horizontal gold line, employed to divide the works in half horizontally, is a compositional device to signify the symbolic in the reflection (water) below, with what is above (air). It acts as the delineation and meeting point of above and below, through the use of the symbols in each work.

20 The 'chalk writing' of 'I AM A VERB' signifies the simple fact that mankind is 'doing', becoming, changing and effecting his reality both Materially and Spiritually. As a personal observation, it is proposed that contemporary man, through his largely Materialistic attitude to the world, is in danger of seeing mankind exclusively in

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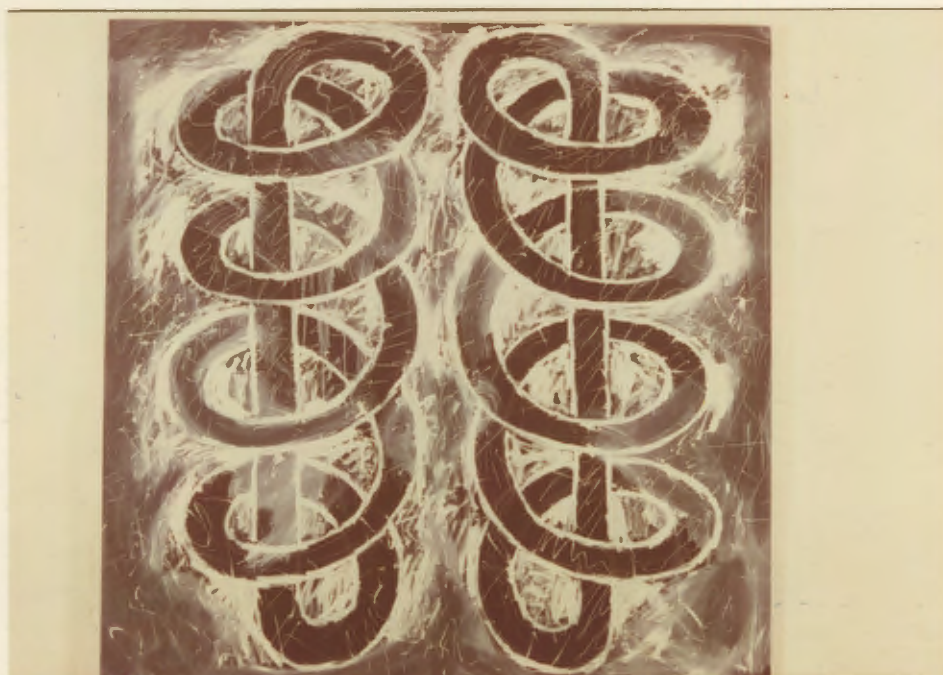
(18) J.E. Cirlot - "A Dictionary of Symbols", p.136.

\* Ibid., p.136.





22



23

terms of objects or matter, rather than as Spirit embodied in a concrete form. This statement, 'I AM A VERB' is an observation which serves as a constant personal re-affirmation of the 'flow' of Reality, as in the Tao and the "I Ching", which is also referred to as the 'Book of Changes'.

21

The fourth painting of this group has, as its central position and focal point, the heart 'growing out' of the triangle, which, in terms of the writer's personal interpretation, metaphorically signifies the two modes of 'understanding/identifying', combined in a unified symbol. It denotes the Mind/Body whole, where the triangle signifies the intellectual approach, embodies the dialectic methodology and the heart/love intuitive and emotional aspect of reconciliation.

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#### A(vi) The Two and Three Dimensional Spiral

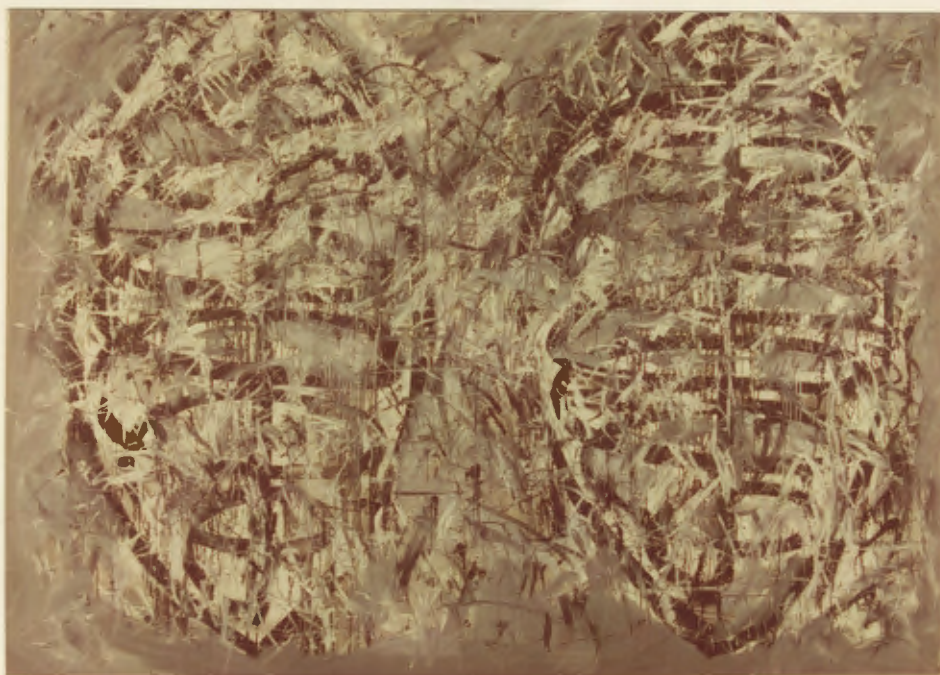
22,23  
24,25

The amount of literature describing the attributes of the spiral symbol is as vast as it is complex. It is certainly one of the primary archetypal symbols and possibly in importance second only to the circle itself. By its very nature it is circular, and thus can be seen as the circle in action or 'at work'. As a sign, it signifies and diagrammatises the very movement, the growth, the evolution of man, nature and his cosmos; it is a working diagram or model.





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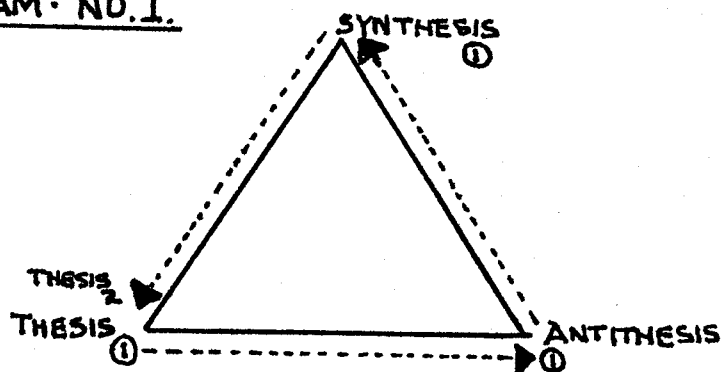


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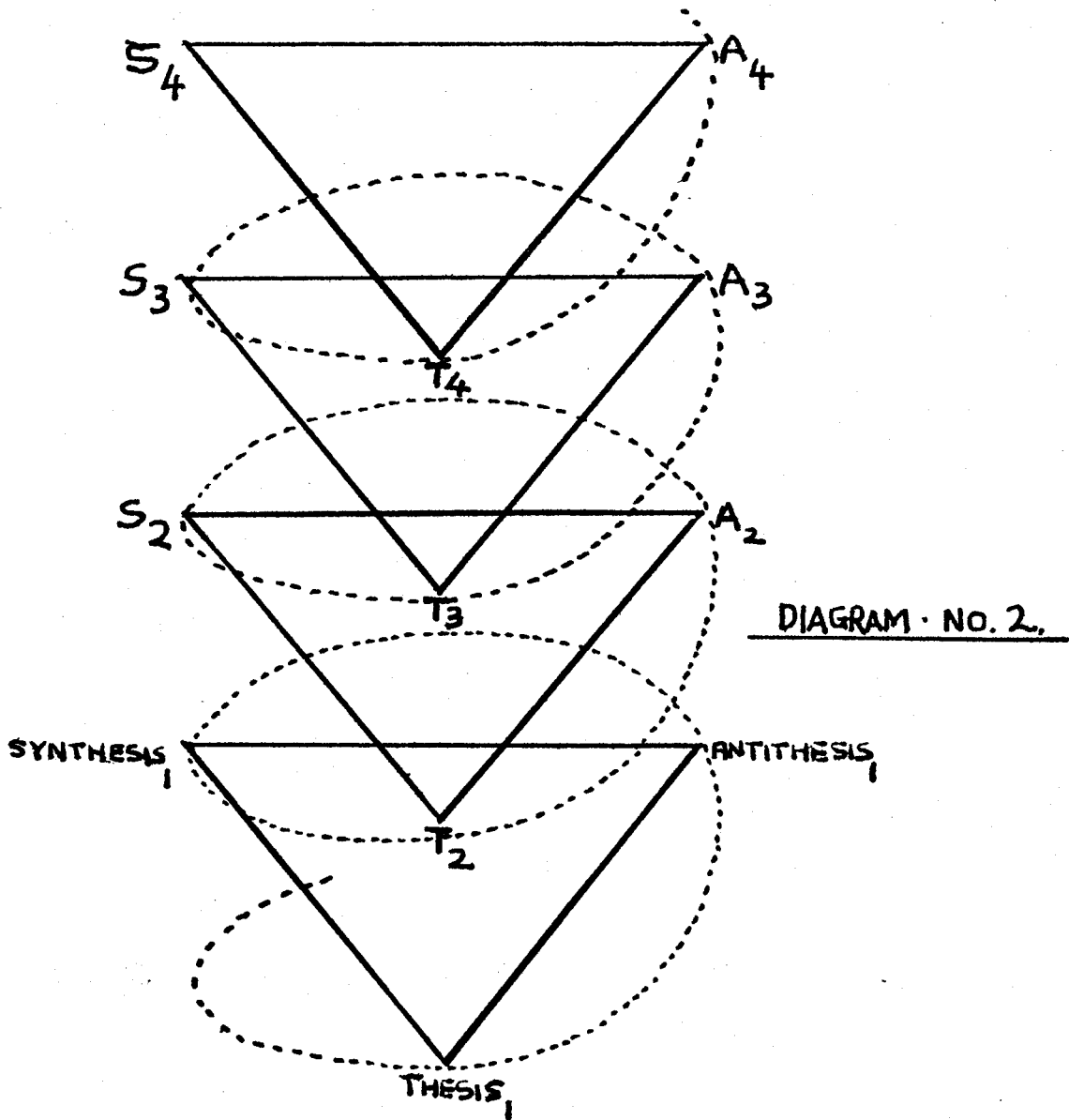
To leave it at the level of a diagram, of course, would indicate a purely empirical and materialistic approach; for it is obviously imbued with the Symbolic and the Metaphorical.

It recapitulates the essence of change and growth itself, by its hierarchical and circular movement. As a symbol, it embraces and reconciles the paradox of Dualism, in that as the thesis and antithesis as polar opposites become temporarily reconciled in and through synthesis (Diagram 1), the synthesis itself in turn gives rise to the creation of a new thesis of a higher order, and the process continues circularly and hierarchically:

DIAGRAM · NO.1.



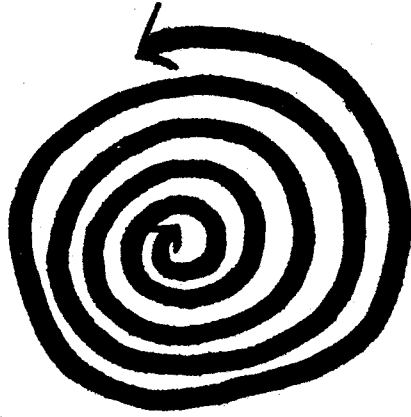
It becomes the symbol for an evolutionary dialectical procedure in reality (Diagram 2).



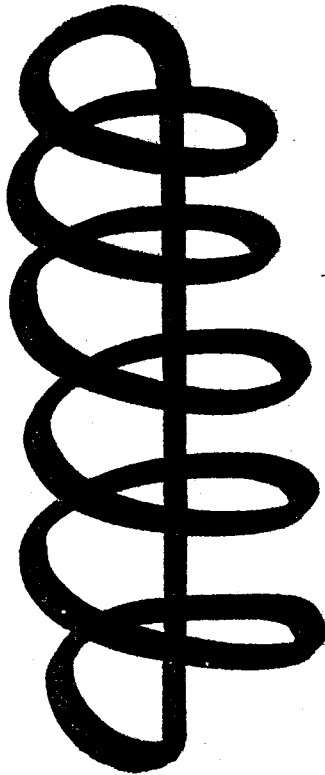
- 22 "The simple two-dimensional spiral has a number of remarkable properties. It both comes and returns to its source; it is a continuum whose ends are opposite and yet the same; and it demonstrates the cycles of change within the continuum and the alteration of the polarities within each cycle. It embodies the principle of expansion and contraction, through changes in velocity, and the potential for simultaneous movement in either direction towards its extremities."<sup>(19)</sup> (Diagram 3).

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(19) Jill Purce - "The Mystic Spiral", p.8.

DIAGRAM-NO.3

- 23 On the spherical vortex these extremities, the centre and the periphery, flow into each other; essentially, they are interchangeable (Diagram 4).

DIAGRAM-NO.4

"There are within every one of us three stages of knowledge. This is the spiral process by which not only individual man but the cosmos itself becomes realized; for it represents the course of evolution. Thus in the early days of humanity, as in childhood, there was no separation between ourselves and the outside world, until we, individually or as a race, became self-conscious. As a result of successive windings, our individual and collective ego crystallized, and we could see ourselves as subject, and as distinct from the world which became the object of our scrutiny. As we looked, the continuum differentiated into 'things'. Each branched into more things, which in turn branched into even more, until the continuum had developed into a hierarchy; language, which once flowed in verbs and processes, broke up into nouns and connectives. The third stage for the individual is that of intuitive knowledge or enlightenment, in which subject and object again become one. In collective terms, this return to a continuum implies not only the need for a new language, like that which physicists are trying to develop, but that the analytic and quantitative world is winding itself into a new simplicity. At the widest extent of the spherical vortex,

the turn is long and slow before we are gathered up into the momentum of the contracting vortex of collective enlightenment. Each person who is integrated, realized and truly individualized becomes universal; and the extremity of differentiation of individual consciousness leads back into the Totality." (20)

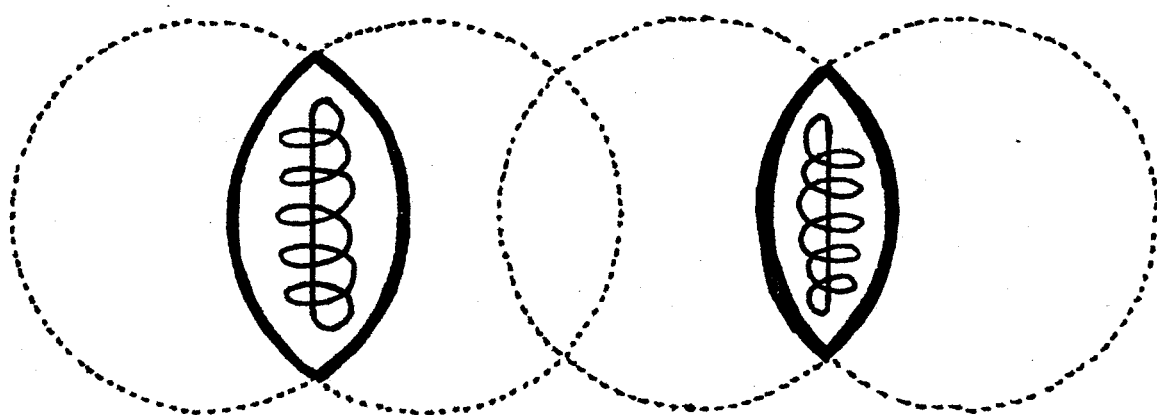



DIAGRAM NO. 5.

- 25 The two opposing spiralling movements of each spiral signify an aspect of Dualism, in that they revolve in opposite directions. This spiral is ultimately "circular" in character, in that the 'top' is joined' through its centre pole with the bottom, and the movement is repeated. This pole, for Central Axis or Axis Mundi, will be discussed later in this explication, in relation
- 25 to the practical work. The containing shape — 

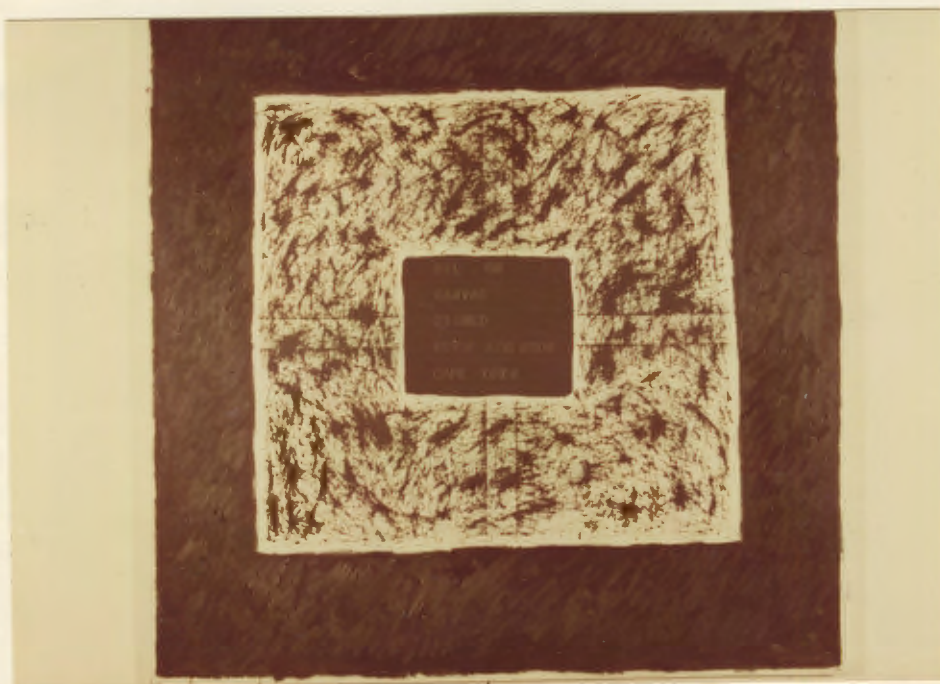
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(20) Jill Purce - "The Mystic Spiral", p.10.





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traditionally signifies the meeting of the Material and Spiritual worlds.

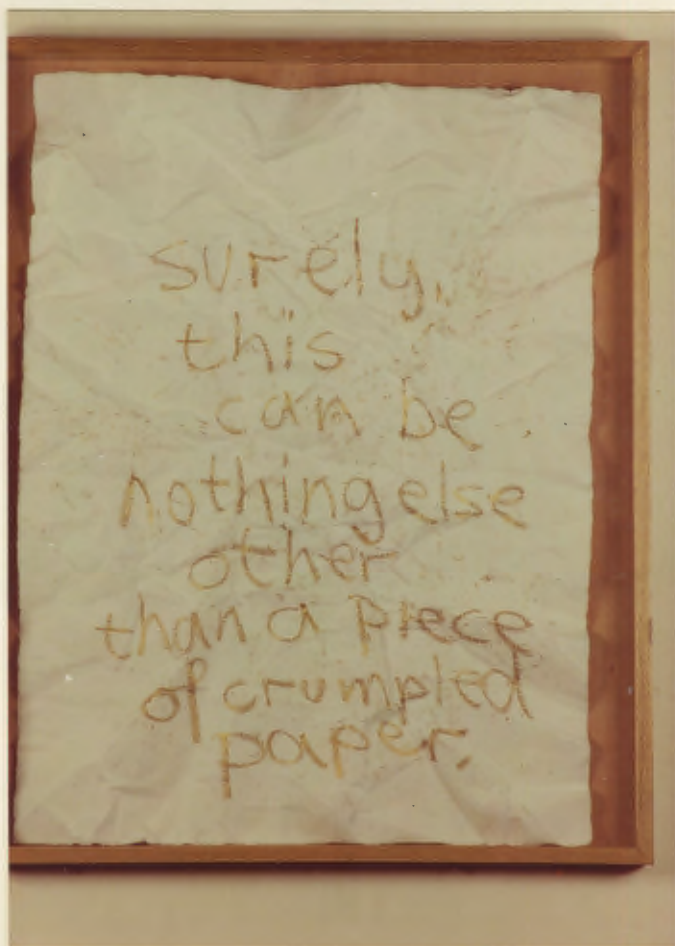
- 22 The words 'CANVAS SURFACE' written diagonally across the surface, help to emphasize the flatness or two-dimensionality of the canvas. At this stage, the writer felt the necessity to move away from the use of illusionistic space, and to examine the qualities of materiality and objecthood, which gave rise to the considerations embodied within the following group, A(vii).

A(vii) Two-Dimensionality Related to Materiality

- 26,27 These four works are seminal to those paintings that  
28,29 conclude this thesis. They mark the break (although not completely) between the use of generally monochromatic paint on canvas as illusionistic space, and the introduction of 'materiality' and 'objecthood' into the work.
- 26 The attempt to purely describe the nature of the surface, that is, the two-dimensional characteristics, through the use of oil paint, is emphasized by the use of the
- 27 words, CANVAS SURFACE - OIL ON CANVAS. This surface is still further articulated by marking or rubbing the surface with paint in such a manner that the wooden supports of the canvas stretcher were encouraged to show through onto the canvas face. The painting act was one that attempted nothing else other than to show



28



29



that the 'painting' was an object, and as such, it became self-referential. The painting referred to the fact that it was a painted object. On the left-hand edge of the canvas, the stretcher's thickness was measured and recorded in centimeters with paint.

- 28,29 After these sheets of thick paper had been painted and written upon, they were gently crumpled, placed into glass box-frames and firmly suspended from above by two pins. The materiality of the paper as objects read as strongly as the 'art' on them. 'SURELY THIS CAN BE NOTHING ELSE OTHER THAN A PIECE OF CRUMPLED PAPER' referred to the physicality of the paper and again was self-referential. These precursors introduced the materiality, the concretization of the work that the writer desired. Having thus far researched and studied the sphere of the transcendent, it became necessary, in some way, to manifest this in day to day reality. Aldous Huxley in "Island" refers to the importance of "spirit concretised". For a man to rise to the heights of the transcendent and concurrently to have inadequate contact with physical reality, was, in Huxley's opinion, not only irrelevant in terms of his society, but would subsequently prove to be 'dangerous' to himself in that man's loss of contact with the temporal would ultimately mean his inability to relate to it.

These notions encouraged the author to return to the physicality and emotionality which colour could afford,

combined with gestural modes of expression in conjunction with the concrete manifestation of 'materiality' of the art object.

At this stage it must be clearly stated that this 'new-found' materiality by the writer did not in any way exclude the knowledge and experience gathered by the previous research and painting, but rather catalyzed a clearer understanding and direction for the subsequent works.



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## 10.B THE INTERMEDIATE STAGE

### B(i) Introduction of Colour as Expression, Incorporating the Symbol

30,31 This stage represents the writer's return to colour, and  
32 the employment of gesture, materiality of the paint, the exposure of the 'process' of painting, combined with the application of selected symbols used in the Investigatory stage.

The 'checker board' used signifies for the author, the complex multi-dualist aspects of both the Material and Spiritual worlds, where 'opposites' are not 'obviously' found, but are dependent upon the models or paradigms that are being used. As in chess, the checker board offers a number of moves in different directions, each with its own corresponding results.

The traditional cause and effectual relationship of Western logical thinking is no longer a simple procedural approach in comparison to the manner in which it has functioned in the past, with relatively stable paradigms supplying the basis for a Cosmology to be established. One may illustrate this point by observing the 'relative stability' of these paradigms in the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Greece and the Mediaeval period. The Renaissance marked the turning point where these stable paradigms were re-evaluated by means of the use of scientific method.





32 A



32 B



32 C





At the present time, where there appear to be no essentially 'fixed' or stable paradigms in the Sciences, Arts or Religion, but rather a situation in which conflicting 'multi-paradigmatic' models are in operation, the very cause itself, is the effect of the model or standpoint employed to establish this very same cause. As such, the above notion behaves in a similar manner to that described by Jacques Maritain when he asserts that the sign not only signifies 'outwardly', but that it also acts as an "inverted" sign. It refers to the model, attitude, place and time from which it originates.

30,32 The 'rainbow-like' images are personal symbols depicting a 'passage', a corridor, a route from one state to another, in the metaphorical sense, and from one element or symbol to another in the formal sense. On this formal level it is a compositional device for the conjoining of primary areas in the work.

When these 'rainbows' or 'passages' continue out of the left side of the painting, the metaphorical implication is that the work is a part of the space-time continuum (as in 'colour-field' painting), and is the result of what has come prior to its existence; or if the rainbow breaks out of the right-hand edge of the painting, it is the cause; with its resultant effect existing outside of the work itself, either in the 'continuous present' or in the future.



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34



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An important aspect of this group is that the author has attempted a personally 'new' use of colour. This new use is, in fact, ancient, in that it attempts to use colour for its own inherent Symbolic value. These values are usually associated with and attributed to the elements of earth, air, fire and water, the human emotions and moral issues. The colours 'exist in themselves', and are not used in the generally accepted 'aesthetic' sense that associates 'harmony' or 'beauty' to combinations of colours. Each individual colour is used essentially symbolically, and not for exclusively visual or 'retinal' means.

- 31 The 'Star of David', alternately called the 'Seal of Solomon':

"is a symbol of the human soul as a conjunction of consciousness and unconsciousness, signified by the intermingling of the triangle (denoting fire), and the inverted triangle (denoting water)". (21)

At the centre of these two interlocking triangles lies the centre point, the point of interchange and the equivalent of the sun, where knowledge of one world (Matter) becomes the foundation of the world above (Spirit).

"Thus, symbolically, the two interlocking gyres of the meditation, form the perfect

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(21) J.E. Cirlot - "A Dictionary of Symbols", p.269.





man, Adam Kadmon. Alchemically, the formula is 'Quod superius sicut quod inferius'; 'As above, so below'. Having six points, this symbol constitutes the union in man's heart of the six directions of space; it is the hexagram or union of heaven and earth." (22)

B(ii) Personal Ritual Grid System. Illusionistic Space. Paint Materiality.

- 33-37 This group of five works reconsiders the premises described in Group A(iv) of the Investigatory Stage, where a pre-established format was conceived, namely the grid, and a 'marking in time' acted out.
- 33 The use of illusionistic space with markings intrinsically contained within the grid system, progresses through
- 34 the use of greater gestural application, though still essentially bound by the grid, to the point where the
- 35 grid is all but completely ignored. The gesture at this stage was expressionist, combined with a thicker use of paint, giving an 'impasto', and the quality of 'materiality'. This 'materiality' and gestural vitality was of prime formal concern.
- 37 The form of the Triptych recapitulates the same sequence as above; progressing from deep space in the first

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(22) Jill Purce - "The Mystic Spiral", p.27.



37 A



37 B



37 C





painting, to the use of thicker paint application and materiality of the paint itself in the third, and denoting the change of the state of mind from expressionist and subjective gesture to the 'cooler' objective 'marking' or 'colouring in'.

- 36 The grid, because of its inherent vertical and horizontal linear stability, brought about the image of the equal-armed cross, and the conscious use of number in sets of three, and its resultant multiples. The colour again was used here as the means of defining each mark, rather than 'pleasing' aesthetically.

B(iii) Re-evaluation of the Retinal Aspects of Painting

- 38 This section comprises one work in which the primary characteristic is a formal consideration and is one of retinality or optical stimulation. The writer reviewed all previous work executed up to this point and became aware of the necessity for the future work to act in as strongly a retinal or optical manner as possible, obviously in relation to the context and subject matter of the work concerned. This painting concludes the intermediate stage.



## 10.C THE CONCLUDING WORKS

Before proceeding with the works comprising the final stage and providing the focal point of the body of practical work, it is necessary to summarize some of the more relevant essential aspects of the ground covered to date.

- (a) In Part One, it was proposed that the schism between Art and Life could be attributed to the loss of efficacy of contemporary religious ritual, and the implication that 20th Century man in his neglect of the spiritual is, for the most part, apparently disinterested in distinguishing the Sacred from the profane; were then described by quoting Mircea Eliade.
- (b) It was then hypothesized that for man to re-connect himself to the cosmos, a contemporary means of religious ritual or its equivalent would have to be re-established for the very survival of man as a species.
- (c) Since religious ritual was previously understood as the physical actualization of esoteric knowledge in Symbolic form, in that it conjoined the Sacred and the Profane and the Material with the Spiritual, it became necessary for the author to examine the area of Symbolism itself.

- (d) An examination of the modes of perception and the subsequent establishment of models through the means of enquiry into the relationship of Synchronicity and Diachronicity was carried out.
- (e) These in turn were then related to the notion of Dualism and its reconciliation, Tradition and aspects of the Spiral symbol.
- (f) The consideration of Universals and Archetypes helped establish the personal wholistic model of the practical work, the relationship between the Sacred space of Ritual and the Sacred Space contained within the parameters of the art-work.
- (g) It was also observed that if the art-work does embody Sacred Space, then the artist executes the role of a Shaman and is characterized by his intuition and possible idiosyncratic ability to express 'Universals' and Archetypes in his work.
- (h) The artist would then carry the considerable responsibility (albeit unconsciously), in ensuring that these (Universals) are actualized in the works themselves, and are what are generally attributed to in terms of 'quality' or 'transcendence'.

Through consideration of the above points, the vertical pole or AXIS MUNDI emerged as a prime symbol in the concluding works, 39 to 43, 45 to 47.

Notes on the AXIS MUNDI:

"According to the traditions of an Arunta tribe, the Achilpa, in mythical times the divine being Numbakula cosmicized their future territory, created their Ancestor, and established their institutions. From the trunk of a gum tree Numbakula fashioned the sacred pole (kauwa-auwa) and, after anointing it with blood, climbed it and disappeared into the sky. This pole represents a cosmic axis, for it is around the sacred pole that territory becomes habitable, hence is transformed into a world. The sacred pole consequently plays an important role ritually. During their wanderings the Achilpa always carry it with them and choose the direction they are to take by the direction toward which it bends. This allows them, while being continually on the move, to be always in "their world", and, at the same time, in communication with the sky into which Numbakula vanished. For the pole to be broken denotes catastrophe; it is like "the end of the world", reversion to chaos. Spencer and Gillen report that once, when the pole was broken, the entire clan were in consternation; they wandered about aimlessly for a time, and

finally lay down on the ground together and waited for death to overtake them. This example admirably illustrates both the cosmological function of the sacred pole and its [soteriological role]" (23)

"The sacred pole of the Achilpa supports THEIR world and ensures communication with the sky. Here we have the prototype of a cosmological image that has been very widely disseminated - the cosmic pillars that support heaven and at the same time open the road to the world of the gods." (24)

"The cry of the Kwakiutl neophyte, "I am at the Centre of the World!" at once reveals one of the deepest meanings of sacred space. Where the break-through from plane to plane has been made, either upward (the divine world) or downward (the underworld, the world of the dead). The three cosmic levels - earth, heaven, underworld - have been put in communication. As we just saw, this communication is sometimes expressed through the image of a universal pillar, AXIS MUNDI, which at once connects and supports heaven and earth and whose base is fixed in the world

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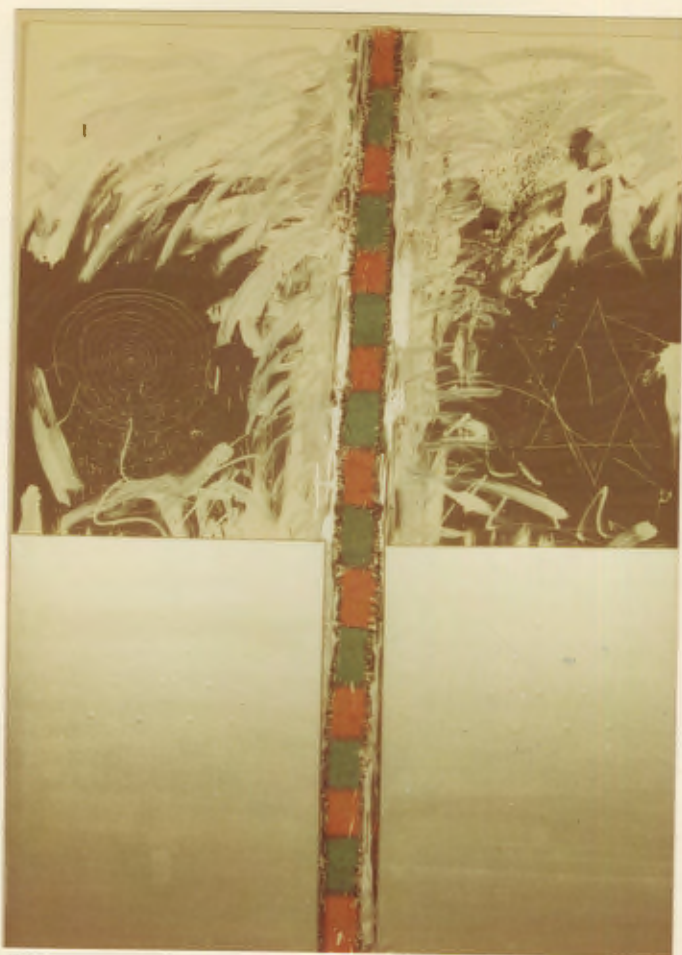
(23) Mircea Eliade - "The Sacred and the Profane", pp.32,33.

(24) Ibid., pp.34,35.

below (the infernal regions). Such a cosmic pillar can be only at the very center of the universe, for the whole of the habitable world extends around it. Here, then, we have a sequence of religious conceptions and cosmological images that are inseparably connected and form a system that may be called the "system of the world" prevalent in traditional societies: (a) a sacred place constitutes a break in the homogeneity of space; (b) this break is symbolized by an opening by which passage from one cosmic region to another is made possible (from heaven to earth and vice versa; from earth to the underworld); (c) communication with heaven is expressed by one or another of certain images, all of which refer to the AXIS MUNDI; pillar (cf. the UNIVERSALIS COLUMNA), ladder (cf. Jacob's ladder), mountain, tree, vine, etc.; (d) around this cosmic axis lies the world (= our world), hence the axis is located "in the middle" at the "navel of the earth"; it is the Centre of the World". (25)

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25. Ibid., pp.36,37.



39



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# 10.C THE CONCLUDING WORKS

- 39-41 These three works introduce in the working process, the first three-dimensional and 'participation' pieces.
- 39 Hinged doors or 'wings' were added on either side of the work and collage applied; a red and green hessian vertical AXIS MUNDI; and a hand-made paper heart. The heart is the only 'real' object, in terms of its materiality, and is white, whereas the other three areas containing the numbers one to zero; the Star of David, and the Spiral, are all placed on a black background. The use of black signifies their relative abstract qualities and that they are manifestations of the intellect and mind.
- 40,41 The vertical 'ladder' or Axis Mundi poles are three-dimensional, as are the blue 'field' canvasses, together with emblem 'hangings' and the 'earth-joining cloths'. A major compositional device used is that of vertical symmetry which signifies the most basic elements of Dualism itself as previously discussed, and the attempt is made by the writer to reconcile these left and right aspects through the symbolic use of a primary symbol or element in each work. The reconciliatory elements used were the triangle, circle, cross and the Axis Mundi.
- 40,41 The achromatic colours of the black and white poles symbolize vertical or transcendent aspiration and





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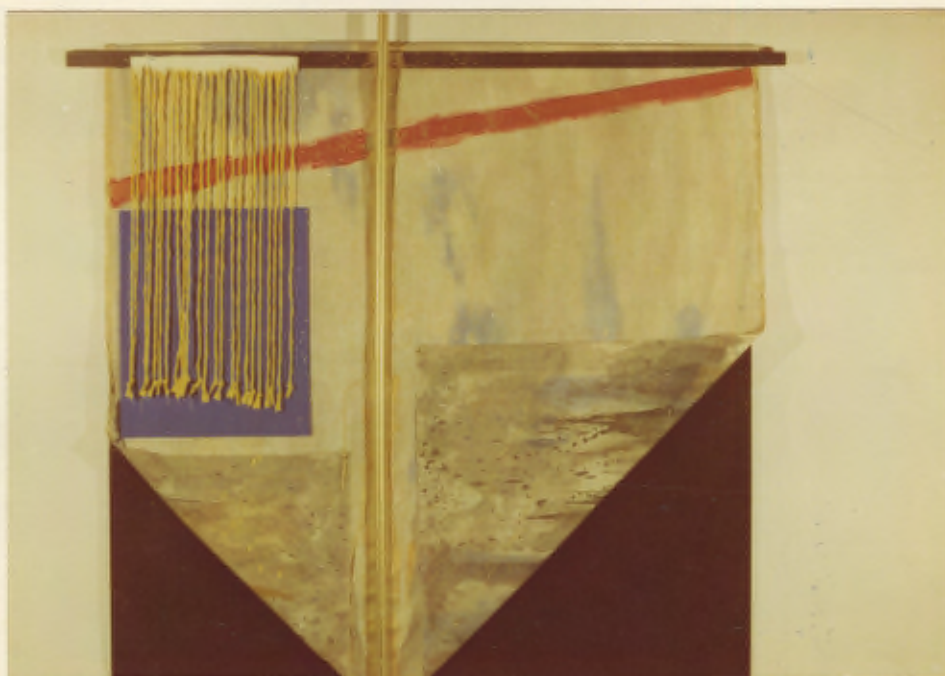
concurrently signify a 'passage' from earth to sky. These poles or 'ladders' originate in physical reality. This is formally signified by means of continuing the vertical line of the ladders onto the 'earth-joining cloths', which are draped from the painting to the floor.

The observer is 'invited' by implication only, to stand on the cloth in front of the painting and participate symbolically in the vertical progression through the ladder. This, as such, is a 'participatory' work, where the observer may, if he wishes, 'participate' in a private ritual. The cloth-hangings attached to the canvas are 'stitched' by means of strong red gestural brushstrokes to the canvas surface itself.

39-41 Colour is used here symbolically rather than in the normative contemporary 'aesthetic' sense. Each colour symbolizes that which it represents in individual isolation, but, quite naturally, will alter according to the context in which it is placed.

The use of gold as a symbolic colour is employed throughout the following works: Cirlot writes:

"In Hindu doctrine, gold is the 'mineral light'. According to Guenon, the Latin word for gold - aurum - is the same as the Hebrew for light - aor. Jung quotes the delightful explanation offered by the alchemist



Michael Maier in "De Circulo Physico Quadrato" to the effect that the sun, by virtue of millions of journeys round the earth (or conversely) has spun threads of gold all round it. Gold is the image of solar light and hence of the divine intelligence. If the heart is the image of the sun in man, in the earth it is gold. Consequently, gold is symbolic of all that is superior, the glorified or 'fourth state' after the first three stages of black (standing for sin and penitence), white (remission and innocence) and red (sublimation and passion). Everything golden or made of gold tends to pass on this quality of superiority to its utilitarian function. Chrysator, the magic sword of gold, symbolizes supreme spiritual determination. Gold is also the essential element in the symbolism of the hidden or elusive treasure which is an illustration of the fruits of the spirit and of supreme illumination."<sup>(26)</sup>

C(ii)

42 This is a seminal work in that it represents a break from the writer's personal use of canvas on a stretcher and

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(26) J.E. Cirlot - "A Dictionary of Symbols", pp.114, 115.



43



44

marks the introduction of the means of assemblage of various three-dimensional painted objects/elements within each work. As such, they may be considered as 'flat sculptures'.

Each material and object is used for its own intrinsic characteristics and appropriately 'altered' by painting to create the required 'meaning' and is then assembled as a whole.

The 'painting' on the canvas is inverted towards the timber base and is folded back to reveal its 'face'. The 'painting' constitutes paint-dripping and dyeing of the canvas, and is presented in such a manner that its 'materiality' is emphasized. The primary chromatic colours of red, yellow and blue, and the achromatic colours, black and white, constitute the fundamental characteristics of all colour and light. Gold lies at vertical centre and symbolically represents 'light' as opposed to the black base, representing 'chaos'.

### C(iii)

43,44  
45,46

This group of four works follows the premises and formal characteristics established in the previous seminal work, No. 42.

Again, these 'paintings' are assemblages consisting of





45



46

various materials and elements; the prime consideration, formally, is that of three-dimensionality, related to the individual symbols. The 'stars' in these works may be seen as

"a light shining in the darkness; (the star is) a symbol of the spirit. Bayley has pointed out, however, that the star very rarely carries a single meaning - it nearly always alludes to multiplicity. In which case it stands for the forces of the spirit struggling against the forces of darkness ... As far back as in the days of Egyptian hieroglyphics, it signified 'rising upwards towards the point of origin' and formed part of such words as 'to hand up', 'to educate', 'the teacher' etc." (27)

44 The rectangle conjoining the apex of the triangle in this work, is symbolic of what lies at this apex and it is stated that "of all geometric forms, (it is) the most rational, the most secure and regular". (28)

45 The duplicated blue columns surrounded by black and white 'energy fields' are isolated in and by their 'physical' contexts (sacking) and symbolize the dualist principle.

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(27) J.E. Cirlot - "A Dictionary of Symbols", p.295.

(28) Ibid., p.260.

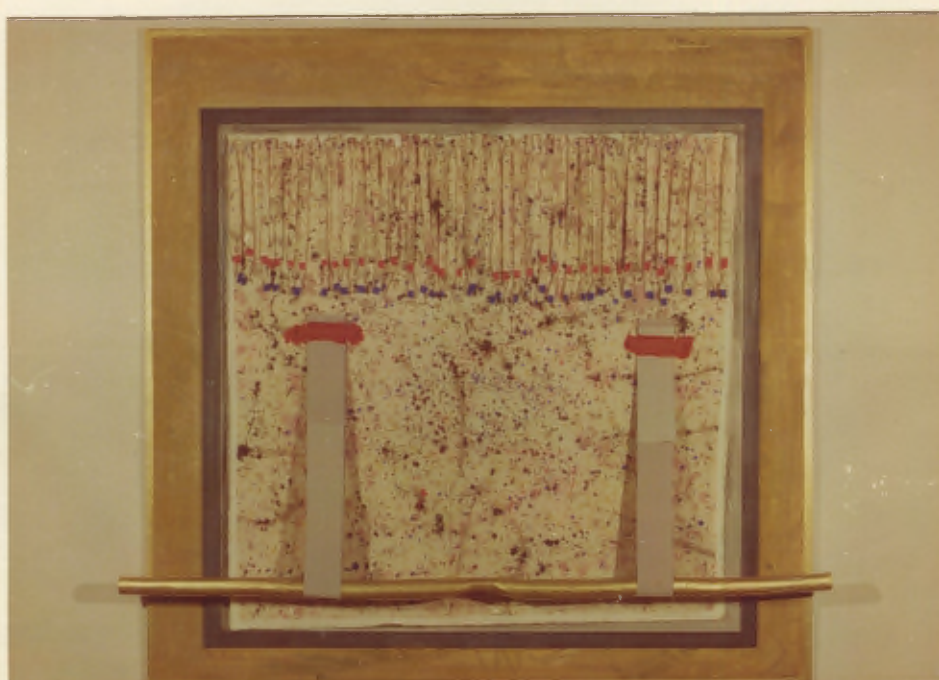
The 'sealed in' columns metaphorically signify the imprisonment of Man in his inability to reconcile opposites, and by being 'locked in' by his own limited paradigmatic model of himself and the cosmos.

- 46 This personal primary work, because has its base standing on the floor, is on the same horizontal plane of reality as the viewer. It is not decontextualized from the physically 'real' plane by being separated onto the vertical plane as is traditionally the case. The central area and focal point of the work is supported by two red (red symbolizing the active, temporal and physical), 'wings', representing in turn both dualism and multiplicity (checker-boards) of the physical world. The cloth 'painting' is attached with its face inverted as in the former seminal work (No. 42), and folded back in the shape of a tilted square, creating the shape of an equal-armed cross. The gold AXIS MUNDI pole protrudes beyond the edges, and is the focal point of the work.

A circle composed of a blue 'star sky', whose centre is obscured or hidden and is implied by the string diagonal cross. It (the centre) is there, but only in the mind of the observer.

"To leave the circumference for the  
Centre is equivalent to moving from  
the exterior to the interior, from form  
to contemplation, from multiplicity to  
unity, from space to spacelessness,





47.

from time to timelessness. In all symbols expressive of the mystic Centre, the intention is to reveal to Man the meaning of the primordial 'paradisaal state' and to teach him to identify himself with the supreme principle of the universe. This centre is in effect Aristotle's 'unmoved mover' and Dante's 'L'Amore che muove il sole a l'altre stelle. Similarly, Hindu doctrine declares that God resides in the centre, at that point where the radii of a wheel meet at its axis." (29)

#### C(iv)

- 47 This object is another seminal work in the concluding stage, in that it is neither a painting nor an assemblage nor a flat sculpture. Although containing the characteristics of all the above mentioned, it is ultimately an object for ritual usage.

The 'painting', dripped and colour-spattered, provides a framework and an emotional/psychological 'field' which establishes the 'tone' or 'quality' of the complete piece.

A highly formal and traditional device is employed in the double 'framing' of the central area and which contains the loose hanging cloth as a colour 'field',

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(29) J.E. Cirlot - "A Dictionary of Symbols", p.39.

and as an object in itself.

The work acts as a framework and psychological context for the suspension of the gold pole in the grey straps. The work is only properly completed by the act of the observer in the removal of the AXIS MUNDI from its horizontal resting position, and the placing of it vertically on the floor. In doing, the participator 'centres' himself symbolically.

As such, this work is essentially a participatory and an individual ritualistic piece, and is only realized completely when actually used.

This 'private ritual' piece completes the body of practical work for this thesis, concurrently providing a new impetus for work still to follow. A fuller understanding of the meaning of the original thesis proposal has been attempted, resulting in a significant qualitative step towards the restructuring of the writer's life.

## 11. CONCLUDING NOTE

The writer has attempted to give an 'insight' into the form and content of the practical work by means of the written section of the thesis. However, it must be pointed out that because of the very 'nature' of language itself, the written thesis cannot and also does not in any way establish an adequate explication of the essential nature of the visual symbols embodied within the practical work.

Apparently, the colloquial form of language has been denuded and debased, in that it contains little symbolic application on the level of daily communication, and therefore functions primarily as a technical, mechanistic and expedient means of basic communication. This in itself may ascend to the levels of sophistication and erudition.

Literature and poetry are naturally excluded. However, as in contemporary art, recent literary trends signify the attitudes of reductivism and the debasement of language; the poet and writer having apparently 'demystified' language for the sake of 'modernism'. To quote Henri Matisse; "We may talk around the painting, but never about it". The inherent, unique nature of each form of communication, whether it be music, dance, language or the visual object, embodies various characteristics and attributes of both the Material and

Spiritual worlds which cannot be translated into or expressed in any other form. If such a translation is attempted, where, for example, the colour Red is translated into music, the result can only be a crude approximation and interpretation of the original.

Although the procedural stages of this thesis, with their concomitant analyses have been cursorily explicated, the 'real content' lies with the viewer's apprehension of the paintings themselves. This explicatory undertaking has proved to have been a completely worthwhile and satisfying experience; it has provided the writer with valuable new personal insights into the area of the Sacred.

The completed written and practical work have greatly contributed to the writer's 'understanding' of his own search for 'meaning' in Life.

It is the sincere hope of the writer that this work will encourage and stimulate the reader to further research these Life-Symbols in art and life, so vitally necessary for Man's Spiritual survival.

12. INDEX OF PRACTICAL WORK

Slide Number	Date	Medium	Size
1	1972/73	Oil on canvas	5'6" x 7'
2	1973	O/C	5' x 7'6"
3	1974	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
4	1973	O/C	5' x 7'
5	1974	O/C	7'6" x 5'6"
6	1975	O/C	5'6" x 7'
7	1975	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
8	1975	O/C	5' x 7'6"
9	1975	Mixed media	5'6" x 5'6"
10	1975	O/C	5' x 4'
11	1975	O/C	5'6" x 7'
12	1975/76	O/C	5'6" x 7'
13	1976	O/C	5'6" x 7'
14	1976	O/C	5' x 5'
15	1976	O/C	7' x 5'6"
16	1976	M/M	31" x 25"
17	1976	M/M	7' x 5'6"
18	1976	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
19	1976	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
20	1976	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
21	1977	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
22	1977	O/C	7' x 5'6"
23	1977	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
24	1977	Ink on paper	30" x 20"
25	1977	O/C	5'6" x 7'

Slide Number	Date	Medium	Size
26	1977	O/C	40" x 30"
27	1977	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
28	1977	Ink on paper	31" x 25"
29	1977	Gold wax crayon on paper	31" x 25"
30	1978	O/C	7'6" x 7'6"
31	1978	O/C	7'6" x 5'6"
32	1977/78	O/C	Triptych - 3 x 5'6" x 5'6"
33	1978	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
34	1978	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
35	1978	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
36	1978	O/C	5'6" x 5'6"
37	1978	O/C	Triptych 3 x 7'6" x 5'6"
38	1978	O/C	7'6" x 5'6"
39	1978	M/M	7'6" x 5'6"
40	1978	M/M	5' x 5'
41	1978	M/M	7'6" x 5'6"
42	1978	M/M	6' x 6'
43	1978	M/M	6' x 6'
44	1978	M/M	6' x 6'
45	1978	M/M	6' x 6'
46	1978	M/M	8' x 9'10"
47	1978	M/M	6' x 6'

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